GREAT COMPOSERS

BOOK I

P. SAMBAMOORTHY

1441

GREAT COMPOSERS

BOOK I

P. SAMBAMOORTHY, B.A., B.L.
Head of the Department of Indian Music, Univerzity of Madraz

THE
INDIAN MUSIC PUBLISHING HOUSE
G.T., MADRAS

[Rs. TWO

PRINTED AT
THOMPSON & CO. LTD.,
MADRAS.

PREFACE

Since the publication of the first edition of the book " Syāma Sāstri and other famous figures of South Indian music " valuable materials concerning the composers noticed therein have come to my notice. This first edition was sold out some years ago. The book is now republished in three parts under the title " Great Composers " incorporating therein the valuable material gathered in the course of researches. Five major composers and a few minor composers are dealt with in Book I. Book II will be devoted to Tyāgarāja and Book III to the other composers. I am indebted to the late Mr. Natesa Sāstri, a great-grandson of Syāma Sāstri for the details relating to the constituent angas of the Sarabhanandana tāla. The Tāla Prastāra Plates reproduced in the book are from the original manuscripts of Syāma Sāstri. Plates III and IV are additions to this book.

19th June 1950. THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS

Tāla Prastāra Plates 1—4.

CHAPTER	I—Introduction	1
"	II—Jayadeva	12
"	III—Purandara Dāsa ..	27
"	IV—Nārāyana Tīrtha ..	37
"	V—Kshetrajna	52
"	VI—Musical Trinity ..	59
"	VII—Syāma Sāstri	63
"	VIII—Anecdotes	90
"	IX—Descendants and Disciples	105

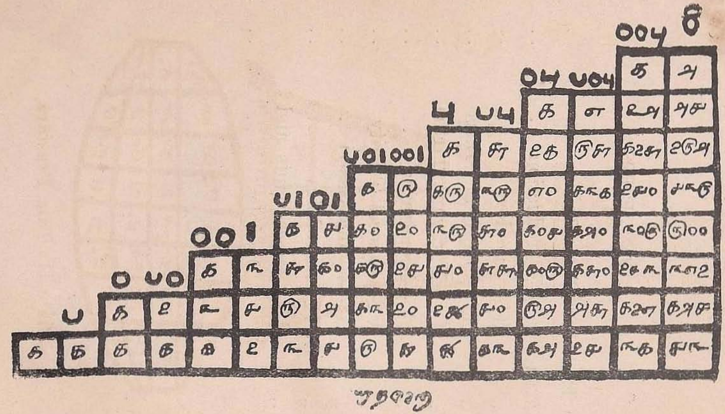


Plate I: Tāla Prastāra.

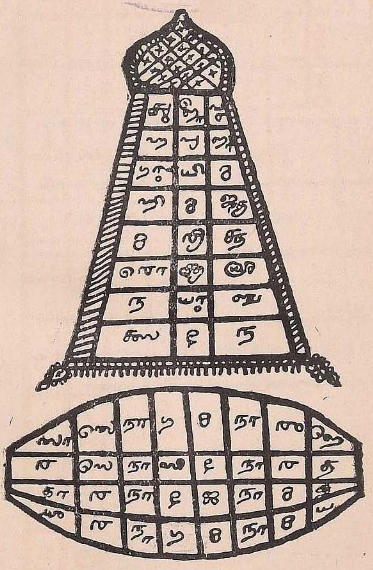


Plate II: Tāla Prastāra.

U O UOOO I UI OI UOIOOI 4 U4 O4 UO4 OO4

															க
										க	ங	சா	உஉ	ருக	ககக
					க	உ	ரு	க0	உ0	ஙஅ	எக	கங0	உஙரு	சஉ0	எசச
க	க	உ	ங	ரு	அ	கங	உக	ஙச	ருரு	அகூ	ககச	உஙங	ஙஎஎ	சாக0	கூஅஎ

U O UOOO I UI OI UOIOOI 4 U4 O4 UO4 OO4

										க	உ	ரு	க0	உ0	ச0
க	க	உ	ங	ரு	அ	கரு	சா	சச	எரு	கஉஅ	உகஅ	ஙஎஉ	சாஙச	க0அக	கஅசச

U O UOOO I UI OI UOIOOI 4 U4 O4 UO4 OO4

															க
க	க	உ	ங	ரு	அ	கரு	உசா	சச	எரு	கஉஅ	உஉ0	ஙஎஎ	சாசச	கக0க	கஅஅங

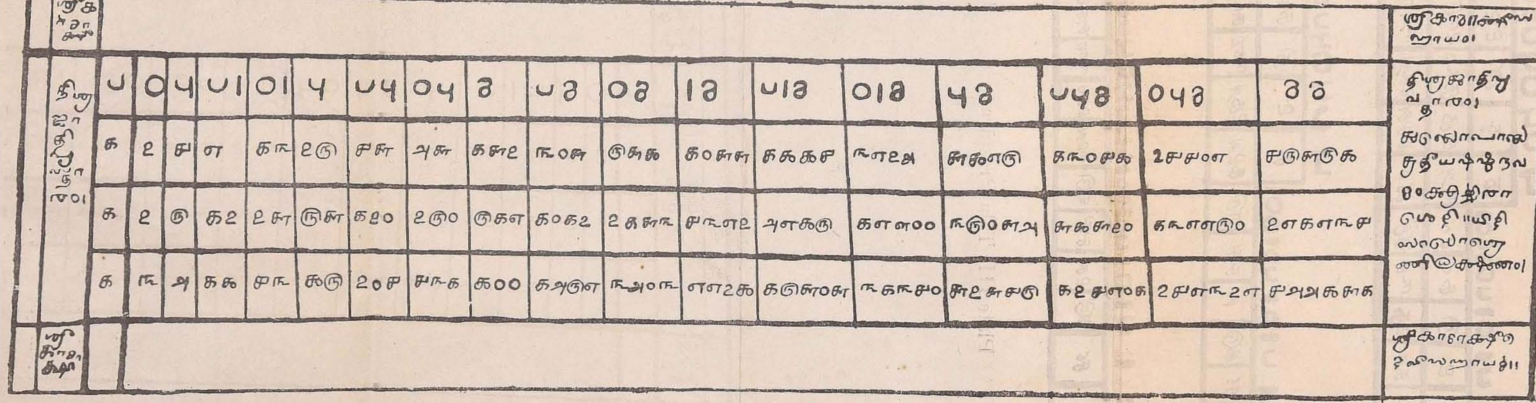


Plate IV: Tāla Prastāra.

GREAT COMPOSERS

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The study of the lives of great composers has a perennial charm. It is an inspiration to know the inner workings of their minds, their religious and musical experiences, their joys, sorrows and struggles. The intensive preparation they made for their calling and the trials they passed through before attaining fame have a moral lesson. The high ideals they preached and practised are a continual source of inspiration to us. To know the circumstances that occasioned some of their best compositions is a thrilling experience. The evolution of their genius and the gradual unfolding of their soul are worth careful study.

Many outstanding personalities have sometimes been landed in awkward situations by the scheming machinations of their contemporaries. The price that they had to pay on such occasions touches our hearts. It is, however, the lot of

only a privileged few to face such ordeals. A knowledge of the reactions of composers to such intrigues, some of them trivial and some of them almost costing their dignity, helps us to form a correct estimate of those composers and their temperament, likes, dislikes and idiosyncracies. The corner touches so necessary to complete the pen-pictures of musical luminnaries are furnished by these episodes.

Just as a critical study of the works of Kambar or Kālidāsa, Milton or Shakespeare, Goethe or Schiller is made, a critical study of the works of classical composers like Tyagaraja or Kshetrajna, Jayadeva or Purandara Dāsa is possible. Musical compositions are after all tone poems.

From the types of compositions attempted by them, composers may be grouped and studied under the heads of:—

(1) Composers of Art Music,

(2) Composers of Sacred Music,

(3) Composers of Dance Music,

(4) Composers of Folk Music, and

(5) Writers of Operas.

Some composers have left behind them compositions belonging to more than one group. But the form in which they have mainly directed their creative talents will be taken into account for the purpose of classification. Thus Tyagaraja has to his credit three operas and many compositions belonging to the realm of sacred music and art music. But the bulk of his compositions belongs to the realm of art music and so he will be studied principally as a composer of art music.

Secondly, composers may be grouped and studied from the point of view of the language adopted by them in their compositions. Thus we can have the following classification: Sanskrit composers, Telugu composers, Tamil composers, Kannada composers, etc. Where composers have composed in more than one language, the language in which they have mainly directed their genius will be taken into account for the purpose of this classification. Thus Tyagaraja who has composed in both Telugu and Sanskrit will be studied under the head of Telugu composers, since the bulk of his compositions is in Telugu.

Thirdly, from the point of view of the musical worth of their compositions, composers may be classified into major composers and minor composers. Thus, Tyagaraja will be studied under the head of major composers and composers like Mysore Sadasiva Rao under the head of minor composers.

Fourthly, composers may be grouped and studied under the heads of those belonging to the following periods:—

(1) Ancient Period,
(2) Mediæval Period, and
(3) Modern Period.

Many composers have to their credit only a few compositions. A few have to their credit some hundreds of compositions. But there are prolific composers like Arunagirinathar, Purandara Dāsa, Kshetrajna and Tyagaraja who have to their credit some thousands of compositions.

In addition to a critical estimate of the contribution of a composer, the details relating to a composer can be classified and studied under the following heads:—

(*a*) General,

(*b*) Biographical and
(*c*) Musical.

The following particulars will be of help in making a detailed and critical study of a composer:—

1. General

1. His place in Indian music in general and in South Indian music in particular.
2. The period when he lived.
3. Whether he belongs to any group of composers, like the Musical Trinity.
4. Whether he was a natural composer or drifted into composing by an accident.
5. Whether he can be called a *sahaja vāggēyakāra*.
6. Whether his compositions are popular with the classes or with the masses or with both.
7. In addition to being a composer, whether he was also a *lakshana-lakshya vidvan*, i.e., a musicologist and a performer.
8. Whether he was a singer or instrumentalist or both.
9. His literary and musical scholarship.

10. The influence he exerted on his contemporaries and on the musicians and composers after him.
11. His personality.
12. His likes, dislikes and habits; his whims, fancies and idiosyncracies.
13. His daily routine of life.
14. His Ishta devata.
15. His views on important topics.
16. His reaction to public criticism.
17. His friends.

---

2. Biographical: Chronological events in his life.

1. Date of birth and horoscope.
2. Place of birth and the significance if any of that place.
3. His house name or family name.
4. His gotra, sutra and sarmam.
5. His lineal ancestors (maternal and paternal) and whether any of them have found a place in musical history.

6. His lineal descendants and whether any of them had achieved fame in the realm of music.
7. Early life and education. The masters under whom he studied or institutions wherein he had his general education.
8. The age at which he had his upanayanam and the age at which he got married.
9. Whether he was blessed with a wife who shared his musical life.
10. The number of children he had.
11. The incidents that proved turning points in his career.
12. The important places visited by him during his travels or pilgrimages.
13. The year of his shasṭiabdapūrti and śatābhishekam.
14. Whether he took to Sanyāsa āśrama later in his life.
15. His last days and interesting circumstances if any, attending his demise or siddhi.
16. The manner in which his memory is perpetuated.

17. Festivals if any, held in his honour and the places wherein they are held.

---

3. MUSICAL: Particulars of musical interest and value.

1. His inherited talents and gifts.
2. The various masters under whom he studied Musicology and Practical music—Vocal and instrumental.
3. His Guru Parampara.
4. His Sishya Parampara.
5. The age at which he began to compose and his earliest attempts at composition.
6. The age at which he established himself as a composer of rank.
7. The incidents that occasioned some of his famous compositions.
8. Whether his compositions besides possessing an entertainment value possess a lakshana value as well.
9. Whether the compositions are of such excellence as to make even top-ranking musicians hear and perform them any number of times.

10. Musical luminaries and other eminent men whom he met or who met him.
11. Musical honours bestowed upon him.
12. Musical honours bestowed by him on his contemporaries and rising musicians.
13. Whether he held the post of Samasthana vidvan in any court.
14. Whether a royal composer or patron; the Samasthana vidvans that adorned his court.
15. His mudra and the reason, if any, for his adopting the particular mudra.
16. Internal evidences, if any, furnished by his sāhityas.
17. Solecisms, if any, and their justification.
18. Peculiar words and idioms used by him in his sāhityas.
19. Obsolete prayogas, if any, used by him in his compositions.
20. Outstanding achievements, in the realm of performance.
21. Prominent musicians who specialised in his compositions.

CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF HIS CONTRIBUTION.

1. Analysis of his contributions under the heads of art music, sacred music, dance music and opera.
2. Group kritis or other composite pieces composed by him.
3. Any new type of composition created, popularised or perfected by him.
4. Any new style or technical beauty or technique ushered in, or popularised by him.
5. New ragas and talas, if any, created by him and his compositions in those new ragas and talas.
6. Analysis of the merits of his compositions under the heads of dhātu, mātu, gamakas, skilful portrayal of raga bhāva, etc.
7. Whether his compositions touch our hearts or merely have an intellectual appeal.
8. Whether he was a master of rhythmic technique like Syama Sastri.
9. Whether he was a dynamic composer, bent on making courageous experiments in

musical expression, or whether he was content to follow the familiar path of his predecessors.

10. Whether his compositions are versatile and prolific.
11. The characteristics of his compositions composed during the different periods of his musical career.
12. His contribution to raga lakshana and musicology in general.
13. His favourite ragas, talas and tempo.
14. The language or languages in which he has composed and the extent of his command over them.
15. The beauty of the language employed by him.
16. Whether his style is pedantic and ornate, or simple.

CHAPTER II

Jayadeva

Jayadeva, the illustrious author of the *Gita Govinda,* was born at Kindubilvam (also called Kenduli) in Birbhum, (Virabhūmi), Bengal. The village Kenduli is on the northern bank of the river Ajaya, in the delta of Virabhūmi. He refers to his birth place in the 7th ashtapadi: Kindubilva samudra sambhava .... He was an Oriya Brahmin and lived in the twelfth century. He was the earliest of the Bengali poets. He was one of the gems that adorned the court of King Lakshmanasena (1116 A.D.) of Navadvīpa (modern Nadia) in Bengal. Over the gateway of Raja Lakshmanasena's Palace at Gauda is an inscription, which mentions Govardhana, Sārana, Jayadeva and Umāpati as the gems that adorned his court.

Jayadeva's parents were Bhojadeva and Ramādevi. He became an erudite scholar early in his life. He took to a life of poverty and lived in a small hut outside the village. He spent most of his time in meditation.

In the same village there lived another Brahmin, Devasarma by name. He vowed to God Purushottama, that the first child born to him would be given as an offering to the Deity. In course of time, Devasarma's wife, Vimalāmba, conceived and a daughter was born. This child was named Padmāvati. When this daughter came of age, the father took her to the temple of Jagannatha and communicating his vow to the priests of the shrine left her there. The priests did not know what to do with her. That night they had a dream in which God appeared and said that she may be taken to Jayadeva and given in marriage to him, inasmuch as he (Jayadeva) was an *amsa* (aspect) of Himself.

The priests communicated the dream to Devasarma. According to the divine command, the father took the daughter to Jayadeva, and told him of his vow and the dream. At first Jayadeva laughed and did not believe the story. He ridiculed the father saying, "Oh, Devasarma! What an excellent father you are in having searched for this penniless bridegroom!" Devasarma without uttering a word went to

the temple and brought the priests to convince Jayadeva of the truth of the dream. Even then Jayadeva was not moved. The parent in despair left Padmāvati with him and went away. Jayadeva was touched by the devotion of the girl towards him and shortly afterwards married her according to religious rites. Both of them spent their time singing the glories of Lord Sri Krishna.

In course of time Jayadeva began writing his masterpiece: the *Gita Govinda.* When he came to the 10th sarga, 19th ashtapadi, 7th charana, he wrote the famous lines:—

> "*smara garala khaṇḍanam mama sirasi maṇḍanam*
> *dehi pada pallava mudāram.*"

the meaning of which is "Oh Radha! the poison of love has gone up to my head. Place your tender rose-coloured feet on my head. The poison will come down." When Jayadeva wrote thus, he felt it was a sacrilege to mention that Rādha's feet should be placed on Krishna's head. He scored off those lines, left the manuscripts with his wife and went to the backyard of his house for his oil bath.

During his absence, Lord Sri Krishna came in the guise of Jayadeva with the oil smeared on his body and on the plea that some fresh idea had suddenly struck him, he asked Padmāvati to get the manuscript. He rewrote those very two lines struck off by Jayadeva, and pretending to go back to the backyard for his bath, disappeared. The true Jayadeva returned from his bath and had his meal. When in the afternoon, he took the manuscript to continue the work, he was astonished to find that the very two lines which he had scored off, were again written there. He asked his wife, "Who wrote these lines?" She was perplexed and said, "My lord! Did you not yourself come and write those lines? Don't you see on the cudjan leaves, even the oil drops that fell from your body while in the act of writing?"

This incident was an eye-opener to Jayadeva. He realised that it was Lord Sri Krishna that came there and that it pleased Him to restore those two lines. Inasmuch as his wife had the supreme fortune to see the Lord, a fortune denied to himself, he extolled the spiritual greatness of his wife and immortalised the in-

cident by referring to himself as "Padmāvati ramana Jayadeva Kavi" (i.e., Padmāvati's husband, Jayadeva) in the last charana of this 19th ashtapadi. This particular ashtapadi which bears the stamp of the approval of Lord Sri Krishna has since acquired considerable significance and has continued to be widely and frequently sung. This ashtapadi is appropriately called the *darsana ashtapadi* and also the *sanjivini ashtapadi* for another reason given below. In the 21st ashtapadi he refers to himself as the person who is united with Padmāvati.

The *Gita Govinda* soon became popular. Jayadeva himself sang the hymns in the temple, while his wife Padmāvati danced to them. He refers to himself in the opening slokas of the work as:

> "Padmāvatii charaṇa chārana chakravarti".

i.e., skilled in conducting the feet of Padmāvati (in her dance).

The King of the Province once grew jealous of Jayadeva's reputation. He himself

wrote another parallel work and commanded his people to sing his own ashtapadis in preference to that of Jayadeva's. But the people nevertheless continued to sing Jayadeva's hymns. The king later caused his own work and that of Jayadeva's to be placed on the altar of the shrine of Jagannāth at Puri to see which was accepted as the superior work by God. When the temple gates were opened after sometime, it was found that Jayadeva's work was on the head of the Deity and the King's work was cast on to a corner of the floor. From that time onwards, the King showed great reverence for Jayadeva and his wife Padmāvati.

King Lakshmanasena treated Jayadeva and his wife Padmavati with great respect. The queen became jealous of this and was waiting for an opportunity to play some mischief on Padmāvati. Once, when the king and Jayadeva went out hunting, the queen came to Jayadeva's wife and deliberately communicated to her a mischievous and false report that her husband Jayadeva had met with a tragic end. The moment Padmāvati heard the news, she swooned, fell on the ground, became unconscious and died, shortly afterwards.

The queen little thought that such a catastrophe would overtake her. She was quaking with fear when sometime later, the King and Jayadeva returned. When the king came to know of all that had taken place, he became furious, unsheathed his sword and rushed to kill his wife. But Jayadeva immediately held the king's hand and coolly said: "Oh king! Be patient. A false report had been communicated to Padmāvati. The moment she heard of 'my demise' she swooned and died. But the fact is, I am alive. Let me see if she cannot regain her life." So saying, he sang the 19th ashtapadi *Vadasiyadi,* which bears the stamp of approval of Lord Sri Krishna and at its conclusion sprinkled water on his wife's face. To the great joy of all, Padmāvati woke up as if from sleep. Since this incident, the 19th ashtapadi has acquired special importance and has come to be known as the *sanjivini ashtapadi.*

The *Gita Govinda* is a sringāra mahā kāvya in 12 sargas and is written in high flown Sanskrit. It consists of 24 songs. Each song contains eight charanas and hence the name

ashtapadi. The *Gita Govinda* is an All-India composition and is sung from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. It was composed at a time when the bifurcation of music into two systems Hindusthāni and Karnātaka, had not taken place. The ashtapadi hymns are rich in description and contain vivid portrayals of various situations. They belong to the realm of sacred music and are sung in concerts of art music as well, though not in the ragas and talas in which they were originally composed.

Sārngadeva refers to the ragas of Jayadeva as prāk-prasiddha ragas, i.e., those which were once in vogue and became obsolete afterwards. The ashtapadi hymns are the earliest examples of regular musical compositions—each song being set in a specific raga and tala. The *Tevāram* and *Tiruvāchagam,* are no doubt earlier than the *Gita Govinda* but only the pans (ragas) are mentioned for the Tamil hymns and not their talas, though the structure of the songs suggests to us the possible talas in which they were sung.

Jayadeva was a great Krishna Bhakta. The exclusion by him of Krishna from his

Dasāvatāras makes one conclude that he regarded Sri Krishna as Parabrahma.

Worship of God in the *nāyakā-nāyaki bhāva* (madhura bhāva approach to God) found great support in early times. Manickavāchagar's *Tirukkovai* and Andal's *Tiruppāvai* and *Nāchchiyār Tirumozhi* are earlier lakshyas treating of this mode of approach to God. *Jiva brahma aikya vedānta rahasya,* i.e., the union of the individual soul with the universal soul, is in short the theme of the *Gita Govinda.* Rādha (nāyaki or jivātma), Krishna (nāyaka or the Paramātma) and sakhi (the friend or preceptor who leads the devotee on the path of mukti or liberation) are the prominent characters figuring in this work.

The ashtapadis of Jayadeva are dvidhātu prabandhas, consisting of the two sections udgrāha and dhruva—the latter pallavi and charana. The composer signed the songs with his own name. The dvitiyākshara prāsa (second letter rhyme) characteristic of the songs of South Indian languages is not found in the ashtapadis. The antya prāsa occurs in the hymns.

Some South Indian composers wrote works on the model of the *Gita Govinda* on parallel themes. The *Sivāshtapadi* of Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati and the *Rāmāshtapadi* of Rama Kavi, the *Gita Sundaram* and the *Skandāshtapadi* may be mentioned in this connection.

King Kumbhakarna of Mewar (1433-1468 A.D.) and husband of the famous Saint Mira Bai has written a commentary on the *Gita Govinda,* entitled *Rasikapriya.* In the Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Library, there is a commentary of the *Gita Govinda,* wherein abhinaya word for word is given. These abhinayas are based on Bharata's *Nātyaśāstra.*

About the 17th century, Ramudu Bhagavater of Tirumalrājan Pattanam, a musician and a devotee of the Kāmakōti Pitādhipati, set the ashtapadi hymns to South Indian rāgas and tālas. It is this musical version that is now being generally followed in South India.

This composition of the immortal bard of Birbhum, is a *jīva prabandha* and will continue to be sung till eternity. Sir William Jones in his essay on the "Musical Modes of the Hindus"

(1750) recounts his difficulties in tracing the original music of the ashtapadi hymns. He has published a translation of portions of the *Gita Govinda* in "Asiatic Researches", Vol. III, 1799. The *Gita Govinda* has been translated into English by Sir Edwin Arnold and published under the title: "The Indian Song of Songs". European scholars have called this work a Sanskrit "Song of Solomon". Annual festivals in memory of Jayadeva are held every year in Kendula (Kindubilvam), Jayadeva's birth place. The whole of the *Gita Govinda* is recited during the festival.

In a palm leaf manuscript in the Oriya language, in the possession of Koṭira Krishna Pandāji of Dindubilvam, the date of the demise of Jayadeva is given as: Srimukha year, Mārgasira month, Krishna Paksha Ekādaṣi. This date corresponds to Monday, 28th December 1153 A.D. In the famous temple of Jagannāth at Puri, even now one or two ashtapadis are sung every evening after the puja.

SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY.

I. Sarga (Sāmoda Dāmodaram):

Ashtapadi—

1. Relates to the ten incarnations of Vishnu.
2. A mangala song praising Vishnu's greatness.
3. Description of the Vasanta kāla.
4. Sakhi describes to Rādha how Krishna was spending his time in the company of Gopis.

II. Sarga (Aklēsa Kēsava):

Ashtapadis 5 and 6—

The pride of Rādha that "she alone was entitled to Krishna's affection", gets vanquished. Addressing the Sakhi she says that whatever His faults, she is not able to forget the pleasant moments she spent in His company. She suggests that some arrangement must be made for their meeting again.

III. Sarga (Mugdha Madhusūdana):

Ashtapadi 7—

Krishna feels sorry for his unmindfulness of Rādha.

IV. Sarga (Snighdha Madhusūdana):

Ashtapadis 8 and 9—

Sakhi describes to Krishna the state of Rādha's mind.

V. Sarga (Sākānksha Puṇḍarikāksha):

Ashtapadi **10—**

Krishna suggests to the Sakhi, that she can console Rādha and bring her to Him.

Ashtapadi 11—

Sakhi returns and acquaints Rādha with Krishna's wish.

VI. Sarga (Dhrishṭa Vaikunṭha or Sotkanṭha Vaikunṭha):

Ashtapadi 12—

The Sakhi comes back to Krishna and says that Rādha was not in a position to go to Him and requests that He might go to Rādha instead.

VII. Sarga (Nagara Nārāyaṇa or the Nāgarika Nārāyaṇa):

Ashtapadi 13—

The moon rose in the sky. Krishna did not turn up. Rādha laments His absence.

Ashtapadis 14 and 15—

"Evidently someone else is in the company of Krishna" lamented Rādha.

Ashtapadi 16—

"Oh! That woman who is in the company of Sri Krishna is free from the agonies and sufferings which are my lot now", further lamented Rādha.

VIII. Sarga (Vilakshya Lakshmipati):

Ashtapadi 17—

The night passed. The next morning Rādha was terribly angry. Just at that time Krishna came to her and requested her to forgive him. Rādha was severe with him and even spoke some harsh words.

IX. Sarga (Mugdha Mukundam or Manda Mukunda):

Ashtapadi 18—

Krishna went away. The Sakhi sternly rebuked Rādha saying, "What a stupid woman you are! What an impudent act you have done! If Krishna totally avoids coming here, what will be your fate?"

X. Sarga (Chatura Chaturbhuja or Mugdha Mādhava):

Ashtapadi **19**—

Krishna again comes to Rādha's house in the evening and persuades her to forget the past.

XI. Sarga (Sānanda Damodaram or Sānanda Govinda):

Ashtapadi 20—

One of Rādha's Sakhis congratulates her on her good luck, since Krishna voluntarily came again. She persuades Rādha to go and meet Krishna at the usual trysting place.

Ashtapadis 21 and 22—

Radha decorates herself and goes to the lata graha (creeper bower) and meets Krishna.

XII. Sarga (Suprīta Pitāmbara):

Ashtapadis 23 and 24—

The Sakhis who came accompanying Rādha, go away one by one on some pretext or other. The raptures of reunion.

Jayadeva, the author of the *Gita Govinda,* is an illustrious Sanskrit composer. His work occupies a high place in the realm of sacred music. All the hymns contain mangala slokas

at the end. The cult of Rādhākrishna derived its inspiration principally from him. The place where Jayadeva began and completed the hymns has since been called Jayadevapura.

The author of the drama "Prasanna Rāghavam" is another Jayadeva. The author of the Kāvya "Sringāra Madhaviya Champu" is also another Jayadeva. "Rādhikā Svāntam" is an interesting Telugu kāvya in flowing rhymes. Its author is Muddupalani, a poetess who adorned the Court of Pratapasinha of Tanjore (1765).

CHAPTER III

Purandara Dasa. (1484–1564).

The different periods of Indian musical history have their distinctive characteristics. One period witnessed a band of brilliant musicologists, another period produced composers of eminence, and a third period musicians of outstanding ability. The medieval period covering roughly the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries was specially noted for the intense output of compositions belonging to the realm of sacred music. Some of God's chosen minstrels were sent to the different provinces of India during that period to give aesthetic joy and spiritual solace to humanity. Each minstrel gave vent to his intense religious experience through hymns in his or her language. These songs, poured forth by these bhaktas, constitute the precious legacy of Indian sacred music. The compositions of Purandara Dāsa justly occupy an honoured place in the religious music of India.

Perhaps next to Tyāgarāja, the name of the one composer known throughout India is

that of Purandara Dāsa, the immortal bard of Karnataka. This shining star of the Dāsakuṭa line has made substantial contributions to the realms of both sacred music and art music. He is the unique example of a multi-millionaire who became overnight a saint and later a composer. The circumstances that led to this sudden transformation in his career are both fascinating and thrilling.

Purandara Dāsa was the son of a very wealthy merchant, Varadappa Nāik by name. (It may be mentioned here that the word 'Nāik' was a title associated with business magnates, dignitaries and men of eminence at that time). He was a Brahmin of the Madhva Desastha sect and was the only son of his princely father. He was born in 'Purandaragaḍa' a village near Humpi in the Bellary District. His mother was Kamalamba. As the child was born in answer to prayers to the Lord of the Seven Hills, the parents named him 'Srinivasa'. He came to be called affectionately 'Sinappa'. There is also the tradition that he was named 'Tirumalaiyappa' (another name for Srinivasa) and that he was called

affectionately 'Timmappa'. Born in affluent circumstances, the child was brought up with great care and affection and with all comforts. In course of time he was put under the tutelage of eminent Pandits. He soon attained proficiency in Sanskrit, Kannada, sacred lore and music. He was married in his 16th year to a girl, Sarasvati Bāi by name.

Purandara Dāsa lost his parents in his 20th year. He continued the business of his father (viz., trade in precious stones). By dint of his ability and business acumen he soon expanded his business and amassed immense wealth. He came to be called 'Navakōṭi Nārāyan' by his brother businessmen. It was however a pity that with the increase in his fortunes, his miserliness increased in the same proportion. This was a thing which caused a lot of concern to his saintly wife.

One day a certain Brahmin came to Purandara Dāsa and requested him to give a contribution to meet the expenses of his son's upanayanam. The Dāsa said: "Let us see tomorrow". The Brahmin came the following day only to receive the same reply. He came for

a number of days and he was every time given the same old reply. Fed up with the disgusting reply, the Brahmin went to the Dāsa's wife and repeated his request. The saintly woman without any hesitation took her nose-screw and giving it to the Brahmin said: "Please sell this jewel and with the amount realised therefrom perform the upanayanam of your son".

The Brahmin was mightily pleased and went to the shop of Purandara Dāsa to sell the jewel. When the Dāsa saw the jewel, his suspicions were roused. As he was an expert in assessing precious stones he knew there was only one nose-screw in the town with the special resplendent gem set therein and that that jewel was worn only by his wife. He forthwith sent a messenger to his wife to fetch her nose-screw for verification. When the messenger came and apprised Sarasvati Bai of his errand, she was seized with a shudder. She did not know what to do. In a peculiar psychological frame of mind she resolved to put an end to her life. She retired to her private apartments to take poison. But as she was mixing the poison in the cup, lo! a miracle happened! An exact

replica of the nose-screw which she had given to the Brahmin appeared in the liquid. She immediately took it, cleaned it and thanking God for having come to her rescue at a critical moment, gave the jewel to the messenger. The messenger brought the jewel to Purandara Dāsa. The Dāsa saw it and was amazed at this second jewel which was an exact model of the one he had in his hand. His curiosity was roused and he went home straight to make enquiries of his wife. Sarasvati Bai narrated to him in a faltering tone all that had taken place from the time the Brahmin came down to the appearance of the duplicate nose-screw in the cup. The episode served as an eye-opener to Purandara Dāsa. He sent his servants to request the Brahmin to come home. They went in search of him but not finding him, came back and reported that there was no trace of the man. The Dāsa felt humbled; the divine light within him was just then lit. He soon gave away all his property in charity and solemnly resolved to lead a life of plain living and high thinking. The very first song that he sang after this episode was "*Mosahodenallo*" in Aṭhāṇā. The charana,

*"Yauvanadalli Sri Haripada nambade,
muvvattuvarusha mohābdi yalli biddu"*

is significant enough. The charana when translated reads, "Have I not wasted all these thirty years of my life without having faith in the Holy Feet of Hari and become a cheat by indulging in worldly things?" (It may be pointed out here that Tyagaraja's first serious attempt in the realm of art music was the piece "Ela ni daya rādu?" in Aṭhānā.) Purandara Dāsa sometime later started on an extensive pilgrimage. It is traditionally related that he visited all the sacred shrines of India, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, *thrice* during his lifetime.

In the year 1525, i.e., about his 40th year, he had his formal initiation at the hands of the Holy Vyāsarāya. His career as an acknowledged Haridāsa and a composer of eminence begins from this period. (It may be of interest to note in this connection that it was about his 40th year that Tyagaraja also completed his recital of 96 crores of Rāmanāma and received the blessings of Sri Rama and that his career as a composer of acknowledged emi-

nence commences.) Satyadharma Tirtha, a later occupant of the Vyāsarāya Mutt, bestowed on our hero the name 'Purandara Dāsa' and this name came to stay with him ever since.

Purandara Dāsa's bhajanas and religious discourses were attended by thousands of people. One and all alike felt the chastening influence of his songs and discourses. He and his devoted wife shone as ideal Krishna bhaktas. It is handed down that God was so pleased with their devotion that He gave them darshan on more than one occasion.

Purandara Dāsa had four sons, named Varadappa, Gururāya, Abhinava and Madhvapati and an only daughter named Rukmini Bai. The daughter was given in marriage to her maternal uncle's son. The revered composer of Karnataka will be remembered by posterity perhaps as the world's most prolific composer. The compositions of Tyagaraja, Kshetrajna, Arunagirinather, and the Tevārakāras run to many thousands. But in the case of Purandara Dāsa the number of compositions comes to a few lakhs. According to the statement in the song, *"Vāsudevana nāmāvaliya"* in Mukhāri

raga, Jhampa tala, we find that the number of his compositions comes to 4,75,000. If the music of all his compositions could be rescued and a non-stop recital of them arranged for, it would occupy some thousands of hours for some months.

Purandara Dāsa is believed to be an amsa of the divine sage Nārada. Tyāgaraja in one of his introductory verses at the commencement of his opera, *"Prahlāda Bhakti Vijayam"* pays his homage to Purandara Dāsa (*see* the kanda padya beginning with the words *"Durita vrātamulellanu"*). Purandara Dāsa has succeeded in presenting the quintessence of the Upanishads and the Purāṇas in his songs. The *Devarnāmas* or *Dāsara padagalu,* as his compositions are generally known, are sung with reverence in all parts of South India. Clothed in simple and fascinating tunes these songs contain lofty ideas, sublime thoughts, valuable proverbs and beautiful similes. Rare ragas like Manjisa Bhairavi, Dvijāvanti, Syāma Kalyāni, Māravi, Madhumādhavi and Vasantabhairavi figure in his songs. He signed his compositions with the signature, Purandara Viṭṭala.

Realising the importance of teaching music through a series of graded lessons, he composed the Svarāvali, Alankāras, Pillāri Gitas, Ghanarāga Gitas and Prabandhas. His ugābhōgas and sulādis are specially worthy of note. Rightly has he been called the *Ādiguru* and *Karnātaka sangīta pitā maha* or the father of Karnatic music. The immortal bard of Karnataka realised the importance of the Māyāmālavagaula scale and from his time students of music began to learn their preliminary svara exercises in this raga. It may be remarked here that South India is perhaps the one country in the world wherein music students practise their early sol-fa exercises in Māyamālavagaula. The emergence of Māyamālavagaula as an important scale also led to the eventual enunciation of the scheme of 72 melakartas. With the *ri* of Māyamālavagaula as the tonic note, the scale of Rasikapriya was got and with the *ni* of Māyamalavagaula's Prati madhyama scale (i.e., Pantuvarāli) as the tonic note, the Kanakāngi scale was got. Thus when the *ādi* and *antya melas* were discovered, the enunciation of the scheme of 72 melas by the later scholar Venkaṭamakhi became an easy task. The Sulādi sapta tālas

came to have their significance from the time of Purandara Dāsa. Since by his time the terms, suddha rishabha and suddha dhaivata, had come to denote the *ri* and *dha* of the Māyamālavagaula scale, the way was paved for the development of the self-explanatory and correct terms, chatussruti rishabha and chatussruti dhaivata, thereby throwing into oblivion the misleading terms, panchasruti rishabha and panchasruti dhaivata. The Dāsa laid the foundation for the future development of Karnatic music on sound and correct lines. The art form, *kriti,* which reached the acme of perfection at the hands of Tyagaraja, originated with Purandara Dāsa. His gitas in Malahari raga are ideal dvidhātu prabandhas. The fact that Purandara Dāsa received encomiums from his own guru testifies to his greatness.

Purandara Dāsa stayed in a maṇṭapa in Humpi for many years. For this reason this maṇṭapa is known as Purandara Dāsa Mantapa. Towards the close of his life he took to Sanyāsa āsrama. He shook off his mortal coil on the Pushya Amavasya day of the Raktakshi year, i.e., on Tuesday, the 2nd January, 1564.

CHAPTER IV

NARAYANA TIRTHA

NARAYANA TIRTHA, the illustrious author of *Krishna Lila Tarangini*, lived in the early 17th century. He is believed to be an incarnation of Jayadeva. He was a Smārta Telugu Brahmin and belonged to the Tanjore District. His family was evidently one of those pandit families which came and settled down in the southern districts during the time of the Vijayanagar kings. His parents were Gangādhara and Pārvati. He had Upadesa from Sivarāmānanda Tirtha. At the end of the 1st taranga, he refers to himself as " Sivarāmānanda Tirtha pāda sevaka ". At the end of the song దేవదేవం కైవలితం (8th taranga) also, he refers to himself as శివరామతీర్థ పదాంబుజ భ్రమరేణ".

Nārāyaṇa Tirtha attained a high proficiency in learning early in his life. He studied the Bhāgavatam and was interested in frequently singing the ashtapadis of Jayadeva. He was an expert in music and Bharata Nātya. He was a grahasta but became a sanyāsi early

in his life and the circumstances that led him take to this āsrama are interesting.

His father-in-law's house lay on the other side of the river Vennār in Tanjore District. During his occasional visits to his father-in-law's house, he invariably swam across the river and reached the other bank. Once, when his wife was in her parent's house, he left his home to see her. As usual he plunged into the stream to swim across. As he was nearing the midstream a sudden current came and literally swept him off. He tried his best to reach the other bank but his efforts proved of no avail. Giving up hopes of survival and being a spiritual-minded person, he decided to take to *āpat-sanyāsam*. Accordingly he threw away his sacred thread, plucked a hair from off his head (as a token of getting the head shaved) recited the relevant mantras and virtually became a sanyāsi. A few moments later, he happened providentially to strike against some undergrowths of weeds and catching hold of them, he found respite. The floods in the meantime began to gradually subside. Relieved of exhaustion he resumed swimming, reached the other bank and

dried his clothes. Having taken to sanyāsa āsrama, he was in a dilemma. He began to argue within himself: "Why not go back to my father-in-law's house? After all who can possibly know that I have taken to this āsrama?"

After some time, he resumed his journey and reached his father-in-law's house. There he was given the usual welcome. When however his wife came to see him, he (who had taken to Sanyāsa and attained as it were a new janma) appeared to her (the embodiment of chastity and virtue), not as her husband but as a *mahā purusha* with a spiritual halo about him. She went back to her parents and narrated her experience. Her parents came and saw him, but to them, however, he appeared only as their son-in-law. The parents consoled their daughter and asked her to go to him again. She went and returned with the same experience once again. The parents of the girl, who were conscious of the spiritual greatness of their son-in-law, were now faced with an awkward situation. They came before him and respectfully requested

him to clear the mystery. This incident was a revelation to the son-in-law. He did not even dream of this ugly development. He confessed the truth and revealed the incident that led him to take to *mānasika sanyāsam* in midstream. He realised the greatness of his wife.

Subsequently he was initiated into the regular sanyāsa āsrama according to the traditional rites. As it was customary for a sanyāsi newly ordained, to go to a holy place far away from the place of initiation, he took leave of them and started for the North. After visiting many holy places, he came to the Andhra Desa and stayed there for a number of years. He remained in the Challapalle and Mukhtyāla Samasthānams in Krishna District. In the latter place he sang in praise of Sri Vedādri Narasimha Swāmi, the presiding deity of the place.

Later in his life, he was seized with a severe stomach-ache. He went on a pilgrimage to Tirupati to get cured by the grace of the Lord of the Seven Hills. As he reached the foot of the Hills, he heard a divine voice say-

ing, " You will not get relief from your ailment here. You must go to a shrine in the South near Tiruvayār where an *amsa* of mine has already gone ". Leaving Tirupati, the Yatindra started for the South and came to Tiruvayār in course of time.

Prior to his advent in the South, a certain sanyāsi from Tirupati with an idol of Venkaṭāchalapati and Ubhaya Nāchiyār was proceeding to the South on pilgrimage. This incident was after the battle of Tallikota in 1565. He halted at different places for some years and at last came to the temple at Varahur. He kept the idol in the shrine, offered puja to the deity and stayed there for some months. Thinking of resuming his journey, he tried to remove the idol but lo! the idol got rooted to the ground and would not move. Later he heard a divine voice saying, " *I like to stay here! Do not disturb me* ". So the idol was left in the place and this was the idol referred to by the Divine Voice to Nārāyaṇa Tirtha at the foot of the Tirupati Hills. The present Utsavamurti of the temple at Varahur is the one from Tirupati.

The Yatindra at last came to the Naḍukkāveri village and slept in the Pillaiār temple that night. During his sleep he had a dream in which a voice told him thus: "Tomorrow morning after your customary prayers, two varāhas (wild boars) will appear before you; follow them and at the place where they disappear you will be cured of your chronic ailment".

Next morning the Yatindra woke up, finished his bath and prayers and in accordance with the divine command two wild boars suddenly appeared before him. As he offered prayers to God Vigneswaraa of the temple in which he was sleeping, he found to his joy Vigneswara beckoning him to follow the animals, which had already begun to move westwards in the direction of Varahur. Even now the Pillaiār of this temple has the fingers pointed in the direction of Varahur.

The Yatindra followed the animals and as they came to the outskirts of Varahur village, they plunged into the canal *Kaḍungāl*, swam across, entered the village, and stood in front of the local Venkaṭaramaṇaswāmy temple

for a while and disappeared. The Yatindra entered the temple and to his astonishment found that he had obtained instant relief from his dire ailment. He offered thanks to God for having guided him to that place and resolved to spend the rest of his life there. He built a temple and himself made the Mulasthāna pratishṭa and Chakra pratishṭa. The Mula Vigraha is *Lakshmi Nārāyaṇa Perumal.* His own sāligrāmam and the puja materials used by him are still in the temple.

Some of the senior inhabitants of the village had a dream the previous night that a holy person was coming to their village the following day and that they should welcome him. The villagers easily identified Nārāyaṇa Tirtha as the man referred to in their dreams and welcomed him in a manner befitting his rank. The village which was known as Bhupatirājapuram till that day, came to be called Varāhapuri or Varahur on account of the advent of the holy boars. The village prospered after the advent of the Mahā Purusha. The village is fifteen miles to the north-west of Tanjore.

Being a Krishna bhakta and a devout

student of the Bhāgavata, Nārāyaṇa Tirtha desired to write a work on the lilas of Sri Krishna. He began the *Krishna Lila Tarangini* and completed it. He has given the essence of the Bhāgavata dasamaskanda in this work. He taught the songs and abhinaya for them to a number of his disciples and produced the whole work in front of the Deity, himself acting as the Nrityāchārya. In the song in Nāṭa rāga "Jaya Jaya Ramānātha" in the 1st taranga, he refers to Varāhapuri Venkatesa. In the song "Kāmkshe tava prasādam" in the 12th taranga, he refers to the fact of his being cured from his ailment. The Yatindra had an idea of writing the ekādasaskanda also in the form of an opera. But when he concluded the *Krishna Lila Tarangini* he was blessed with the darshan of Sri Krishna in the Kalyāna-kolam and he therefore did not proceed with the ekādasaskandam.

Many miracles are attributed to Nārāyaṇa Tirtha. In two of the songs in the *Krishna Lila Tarangani,* the village, Varahur, is referred to by the original name of Bhupatirāja-puram. After his coming to Varahur, he lived

only for two or three years. He entered into the state of samādhi on the Sukla Ashtami day of the Māsi month (Krittika star, Thursday). His samādhi is in Tiruppunturutti village, a holy place immortalised by Tirujnāna Sambandar in his Tevāram hymns.

Nārāyaṇa Tirtha's samādhi is a jiva samādhi. The mango tree under which he sat for meditation during his last days is in front of the samādhi and to the north of it.

The Krishna Jayanti festival is celebrated with great pomp every year in Varahur and during this festival one can hear the entire *Krishna Lila Tarangini* faithfully sung by devotees. Varahur Gopāla Bhāgavatar in recent times did much to popularise the *Krishna Lila Tarangini.* The portraits of Nārāyaṇa Tirtha and Gopāla Bhāgavatar adorn the temple at Varahur. The Yatindra also composed songs for the temple rituals. Some songs of his relate to the festival of the Siva shrine at Varahur.

Besides the *Krishna Lila Tarangini,* Nārāyaṇa Tirtha has also written a Telugu

play entitled *"Pārijātapaharana Nātakam"*. This Nātaka bears evidence to the fact that Nārāyaṇa Tirtha visited Meraṭṭur.

Sonṭi Venkaṭasubbayya belongs to the Sishya parampara of Nārāyaṇa Tirtha. The ashtapadis and tarangas have come to occupy an honoured place in Bhajanas in South India from the time of Bodhendrasadguruswāmy. The name of Nārāyaṇa Tirtha in his purvāsrama is not definitely known.

SRI KRISHNA LILA TARANGINI

Sri Krishna Lila Tarangini (literally, the river of the lilas of Sri Krishna) is the finest and the longest opera in the Sanskrit language. It consists of dvādaśa tarangas (12 cantos), even as the immortal work of Jayadeva consists of 12 sargas. The subject matter of the work relates to the daśamaskandam of the Bhāgavatam. It begins with the avatār of Krishna and ends with the marriage of Krishna and Rukmini. The work is worth study even as a piece of literature. The language used by him is chaste and at the same time sweet and simple. The Sanskrit opera reached the acme of perfection in his hands. The author portrays in

vivid language, clothed in delightful music, the various lilas of Krishna. The work is an authoritative lakshya grantha for the topic of rāga and rasa. The songs in the opera are in the Kirtana form and are couched in music appropriate to the occasion. Each song is preceded by a sloka and a vākya or prose passage. The slokas, chūrṇikas, crisp musical dialogues, darus, dvipadas, chatushpadis and the songs interspersed with jatis (rhythmical mnemonics) add interest to the work. The songs have the divisions: pallavi, anupallavi and charaṇa.

Nārāyaṇa Tirtha is one of the earliest Sanskrit composers to adopt the dvitīyākshara prāsa in his compositions. The important characters figuring in the opera are: Vishṇu, Brahma, Bhūmādevi, Sanakādi munis, Devaki, Vasudēva, Yasodha, Gopis, Krishna, Rukmini and the Brahmin who takes Rukmini's letter to Krishna. In all 36 ragas figure in the work. We come across a new raga called Mangala kāpi in this work. The compositions in Āhiri, Manjari, Dvijāvanti, Karnātakasāranga and Gauri are noteworthy. There are interesting jatis adorning the songs pertaining to

the section on Rāsa līlā (VII Taranga). The tarangas of Nārāyaṇa Tirtha rank along with the ashtapadis of Jayadeva in the realm of sacred music and are sung throughout South India.

The Krishna Lila Tarangini is fragmentary in some places. This is due, according to tradition, to the following circumstance. He sang before the Deity, in ēkāntam (all alone) all the songs of his work. He retained only those songs to which the Anjaneya vigraha next the Deity inside the *sanctum sanctorum* responded by keeping time. The rest were discarded by him as not being acceptable to God. It is said that the tinkling sounds of the rhythmic beats emanating from inside were heard by many devotees outside.

SYNOPSIS OF THE WORK

I Taranga entitled "Sri Krishna Prādurbhāva varṇanam": Invocation to Ganesa and Venkatesa.

Mangalācharaṇam:—Devaki and Vasudeva imprisoned—Bhūmādevi's prayer to Vishṇu to enter an avatār and rid the world

of evil. Her prayers answered and Krishna is born.

II Taranga entitled "Bāla līla Varṇanam"—The Gopānganas praise Krishṇa—The slaying of Pūtana—Yamaḷārjuna bhanjanam, i.e., the two sons of Kubera, Nalakūpara and Manigrīva, who were cursed and got transformed into two maruda or Arjuna trees (terminalia alata), get rid of their curse and attain their former form. Yasodha blessed with the Viśvarūpa darśana of Krishna.

III Taranga entitled "Sri Krishna Gōvatsa Pālana varṇanam"—The slaying of Aghāsura—Brahma's praise and the praise of the Yajnapatnis.

IV Taranga entitled "Sri Krishna Gōpālanā varṇanam"—Protection of the cows by Krishna and Balarāma—Kāḷiya mardanam and the prayers of the Nāgapatnis to spare their husband—Krishna accedes to their request and asks Kāḷiya to leave the place and go to his former place: Ramaṇaka dvīpa in the sea—The slaying

of Pralamba and Bakāsura—The swallowing of Davāgni (fire).

V Taranga entitled "Sri Krishna Gōpi Vastrāpahara - Govardhanoddhāra varṇanam". Gōpivastrāpaharaṇam — Lifting up the Govardhana Hill—Praise by Indra and Kāmadhenu.

VI Taranga entitled "Sri Krishna Gōpi samāgama varṇanam"—The coming of Gōpis to the Brindāvanam and their spiritual communion with Krishna.

VII Taranga entitled "Sri Krishna rāsa Kridā varṇanam"—Krishna's Tatvōpadēsa to the Gōpis—His dance in their company—The ecstasy derived by them from his music.

VIII Taranga entitled "Rāsakrīḍa varṇanam"—Gōpis sing songs of praise to Krishna — Krishna disappears — Gopis searching for him—Rādha Krishna samvādam—The joy of the Gopis at finding Krishna.

IX Taranga entitled "Krishna Madhurā pravēśa varṇanam"—Akrūra's mission—

Akrūra being blessed by Krishna—Krishna's coming to Madhurā.

X Taranga entitled "Kamsa Nirharaṇam"—Blessing Kubjā and others—Slaying the elephant, Kuvalayāpidam and killing Chāṇura and others and lastly the killing of Kamsa.

XI Taranga entitled "Sri Krishna Dvārapati Pravēśa varṇanam"—Gopis sorrowing at the absence of Krishna—Uddhara's mission—Krishna's leaving for Avanti for studies—Defeat of Jarāsandha—Blessing Muchukunda—Entry into Dvāraka.

XII Taranga entitled "Sri Krishna-Rukmini Kalyāna Mahōtsava varṇanam"—Proposals for Rukmini's marriage being discussed—Rukmini's resolve in her mind—Rukmini's letter to Krishna—The delivery of the letter to Him by the Brāhmaṇa—Rukmini svayamvaram—Krishna coming and carrying her off in His chariot at the stipulated time—Rukmini's marriage with Krishna at Dwāraka.

CHAPTER V

KSHETRAJNA

KSHETRAJNA (also called Kshetrayya and Kshetriyulu) lived in the 17th century. He was a contemporary of Venkatamakhi. He is the father of the musical form called padam. This form reached perfection in his hands. His genius as a composer, his talent in handling apurva rāgas and his gifts in sāhitya and melody-making are all revealed in his scholarly padas. He was a prolific composer and ranks along with Purandara Dāsa and Tyāgarāja in this respect. The various types of nāyakas and nāyakis conceived in Indian literature and their lakshanas are illustrated through his padas. The padam became a powerful weapon in his hands for depicting the varied aspects of raga and rasa. In the sphere of pada, he has no equal. His padas served as models for the later composers in this form. His sāhityas are highly suggestive. There is a pada of his for every imaginable situation or condition in life. It is possible that Kshetrajna drew inspiration for his padas from the *Sringāra*

sankirtanalu of Annamāchārya of Tāllapākam (15th century).

Kshetrayya was born in Muvvapuri, a village near Ghaṇṭasāla in Krishna District. He was a Telugu Brahmin. Early in his life he attained great scholarship in sangita and sāhitya. A great yogi came to him and gave him the upadesa of the Gopāla mūlamantra. He was an ardent devotee of the Deity, 'Gopāla' of his village and it is said that he was blessed with His darshan. Appropriately enough, he signed his compositions with the signature "Muvva Gopāla". For this reason his compositions are sometimes referred to as "Muvvagopāla padas". His signature can be seen either in the pallavi, anupallavi or in the last charana of his padas. His first composition was "*Sripati sutubāriki*" in Ānandabhairavi rāga, Āditala.

He composed a number of padas in rare ragas and in ragas of admittedly limited scope like, Āhiri, Ghanta, Saindavi, Kāpi (Karnātaka) and Navaroj. Sweetness of diction and artha pushṭi are noteworthy features of his sāhityas. His padas are in Kaiśiki rīti and

contain fine poetic ideas. The ragas chosen for the several pieces fit in appropriately with the rāsas of the songs. The rāga bhāva floats like cream on each piece. The feeling that the ragas are shining in all their natural and resplendent beauty comes to one who hears Kshetrayya's padas.

One should have a good training and rasānubhava to be able to render his padas correctly and with feeling. The subtle srutis, delicate gamakas and the nuances should all be rendered accurately. The artistic rendering of a padam of Kshetrajna is the acid test of one's musical scholarship. No concert of art music can be said to be complete, if in the programme, one or two padas of Kshetrajna do not come in. Although the pada is primarily a dance form, still Kshetrayya's padas are sung in concerts on account of their high musical worth. (Illustrious musicians in the past have always included a padam of Kshetrajna in the post-pallavi part of their programme and delighted their audiences with the liquid flow of its music). A good number of his padas will bear the dual interpretation of *bahir sringāra*

(outwardly erotic) and *antara bhakti* (inwardly devotional). The rest are on the theme of *gaurava sringāra* (dignified love) and a few on *pachchi* (erotic) *sringāra* as well.

Kshetrayya went to many samasthānas to give recitals of his compositions. In each place he was highly praised and honoured. From the pada "*Veḍukato naḍuchukonna viṭarāyude*" in Devagāndhāri, we learn that he sang two thousand padas in the court of Tirumal Naik of Madura, a thousand in Tanjore Court and eleven hundred before the Pādusha of Golconda. He has also sung padas in praise of Virarāghavaswāmy, the presiding deity at Trivellore, Kanchi Varadarāja, Govindarāja of Chidambaram, Ranganātha of Srirangam, Chevvandilingesvarudu (అకట–రోసగ వారి Kāmbhoji) and on Lord Kanda of the Kadirgāmam shrine in Ceylon. All these compositions have the mudra, Muvvagopāla.

While he was in Tanjore, as the honoured guest of Vijayarāghava Naik, he composed at the request of the ruler, five padas with the rājānkitam. These five padas in five different ragas constitute the well-known *Vijayarāghava*

Pancharatnam. (This group of padas is sometimes referred to as the *Kshetreya Pancharatnam.*)

The court poets became jealous of the honoured treatment given to a composer who used colloquialisms in his sāhityas—ఏగా, రారా, పోరా etc. They were murmuring amongst themselves and these murmurs reached the ears of Kshetrayya. He forthwith composed the pada in Kāmbhoji raga, Triputa tala "*Vadarakapove*" and leaving the last charana incomplete, he gave the piece to the king and suggested that the Palace vidvans might complete the composition. He then left for Setu on pilgrimage. The vidvans tried and tried but their efforts were of no avail. They were humbled and they eagerly awaited the arrival of Kshetrajna. When the latter returned from his pilgrimage, the Palace vidvans went in a body and apologised before him. Kshetrajna was visibly moved at the plight of these eminent vidvans and replied,

రాము గారు యీ మేనితో ఁక వాని

నాము జూడవలెనా మొదటిపాం దేచాలు

The part of the third charana which he first wrote and gave was:—

భామరో శకునములడిగితి మువ్వగోపాలుడు వచ్చునని
కామించి నాథుఁ గలయు చెలుల జూచి కరగి చింతనొందితి

There is a parallel idea in the 17th ashtapadi of Jayadeva.

Curiously enough the reply he gave served to complete the last charana of the pada. This reply not only fitted with the prosodical structure of the earlier part of the charana but also completed the idea underlying the charana in a fine manner. The poets were struck with his greatness and acknowledged the same before the king afterwards.

In the manuscripts containing Kshetrajna's padas, we find at the top of each composition brief notes relating to the context in which the padam is sung, by whom it is sung, by which type of nāyaki or nāyaka it is sung and other relevant details. Some padas have the signature 'Gopala' alone (వద్దంటెనె and మంచి దినము నేడే). The pada in Madhyamāvati అనుకోప has the signature మువ్వపురి ధాముఁ.

In many padas of his, it is usual to begin with the anupallavi and then sing the pallavi, just for the sake of easily following the sense. Some of his frequently sung padas are:—*Aligite* (Huseni), *Eriti vegintune* (Gaulipantu), *Evvade* (Sankarābharana), *Ayyayyo vegaṭayane* (Nādanāmakriya), *Ninnu juda* (Punnāgavarāli), *Eṭuvanṭi vāḍe* (Nilāmbari), *Emo teliyadu* (Saveri), *Emandunamma* (Kedāragaula).

There is a tradition that Jayadeva re-incarnated himself as Nārāyaṇa Tirtha and still later as Kshetrajna to sing on the theme of divine love.

Kshetrayya is a derivative name and not his real name. He came to be called Kshetrayya as he visited a number of Kshetras. His original name is not known.

The view that Kshetrayya was born in a village called Muvvapuri in the Chandragiri Taluq of Chittoor District is also supported by local tradition. Scholars in Telugu opine that his dialect does not reveal that he is a native of Krishna District.

CHAPTER VI

Musical Trinity

The period 1750-1850 seems to have been a remarkable period in the history of music all the world over. The greatest musical geniuses of the world lived and flourished during that period. Europe saw at that time the great composers Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schubert and Weber. The Musical Trinity of South India lived and flourished during that period. It seemed as if God in His bounteous mercy resolved upon sending His musical apostles to the earth during that period to deliver the message of music.

The three great composers, Tyāgarāja (1767-1847), Muttuswāmy Dikshitar (1776-1835) and Syāma Sāstri (1762-1827) are called the Musical Trinity (Sangita Trimurti and Sangita Mummaṇigal (ஸங்கீத மும்மணிகள்) of South India. They were great musicians and were kings in their own realm. Their kritis are rāga crystals. For the polished nature of their music and the beauty of their language, their compositions will long remain

unsurpassed. The presentation of rāgas in their modern setting, the uncommon facility with which they wrote in apurva rāgas, the individual quality of the different kritis in the same rāga, the abundance of feeling running through their pieces, the sublime and soul-stirring nature of their music, all these and more have entitled them to be ranked as the Musical Trinity. The Musical Trinity are primarily responsible for making Tanjore the brightest spot on the musical map of South India.

There are also other interesting points about them. They were men of rare scholarship, proficient in Sanskrit and Telugu and well versed in the Vedas, Sāstras, and other sacred lore. They were adepts in the Jyotisha Sāstra and Mantra Sāstra. They were contemporaries and lived in the Tanjore District. They were all born in Tiruvārur. According to the Tamil saying, கமலையில் பிறக்கமுக்தி salvation was assured to those who were born in Tiruvārur. Special circumstances attended the birth of all these three. Divinely appointed musical preceptors were said to have come to initiate them in the higher branches of the musical art. In the case of Tyāgarāja it was Sage Nārada him-

self who was said to have come in the guise of a sanyāsi and presented him with the rare work '*Svarārnava*'. There is internal evidence in his kritis to show that something of this kind did take place, but unfortunately the work '*Svarārnava*' is lost. There are various explanations: that this work was destroyed by fire; that it lies buried somewhere in Tiruvayār; that it was smuggled out by someone on the day of Tyāgarāja's siddhi and so on. Excerpts from the '*Svarārnava*' are seen in a manuscript in the Walajapet collections. The musical preceptors of Muttuswamy Dikshitar and Syāma Sāstri were Chidambaranatha Yogi and Sangita Swamy. All the three composers were great devotees who spoke to God and to whom God spoke. They exhibit distinctive styles in their kritis and developed that musical form to perfection. The styles of Tyāgaraja, Muttuswāmy Dikshitar and Syāma Sāstri have been rightly associated with the *drāksha rasa, nālikera rasa* and *kadali rasa* respectively. It is difficult to improve upon the music of their pieces. The rāga svarūpa is patent on the face of every one of them. Their compositions are the shining lakshyas for ādhunika sangita. They have brought out the best in South Indian

music. They have to their credit a number of group kritis like Pancharatna, Navāvarana kriti, Navaratnamālika, etc. They were great moralists and philosophers. They had tasted the sweet nectar of *nija sangita* (true music) and enjoyed the pleasures thereof. Like the Tevarakāras and Alwārs, all the three visited the important shrines in South India and sang songs in praise of the respective Deities. Lastly each shook off the mortal coil punctually on the day and hour predicted.

CHAPTER VII

SYĀMA SĀSTRI

Syāma Sāstri came of the community known amongst the Tamil-speaking Brahmins of Southern India as the Vaḍa-desattu Vaḍamāl (வடதேசத்துவடமாள்). His ancestors originally lived in Cumbum in Kurnool District, and were therefore called Cumbattār (கம்பத்தார்). They later migrated to Kānchipuram in Chingleput District. They were not archakas (temple priests) by profession. The story of how they came to be appointed archakas is interesting.

Tradition has it that Brahma once performed a penance at Kānchipuram and at the conclusion of the same saw the *Jyoti* (divine light) of Devi, which almost blindfolded him. To commemorate the great event, He Himself prepared a swarna vigraha (golden-image) of the Goddess and installed the same in a temple.* After the consecration ceremonies, He offered puja to the Deity. The idol was then called

BANGĀRU KĀMĀKSHI

on account of the large proportion of gold in the alloy of the metal. This is the idol that

---

* It will be interesting to note in this connection, that Kānchipuram is one of the few places in South India, having a temple to Brahma.

is now kept in the Kāmākshiamman Temple in Tanjore. It is recorded that Sage Durvāsa, amongst other Maharishis, performed puja to the Deity. When Ādi Sankarāchāryār visited Kānchi, the temple was in a dilapidated condition. He renovated the same and ordered that henceforth there shall be Smartha Vaidika puja to the Deity. The Jagadguru chose the ancestors of Syāma Sāstri for the purpose as they were well known for their piety and sound learning.

MIGRATION

For some centuries everything went on well. But after the fall of the kingdom of Vijayanagar in 1565 A.D. troublous times arose. The archakas thought it advisable to leave Kanchi with their *Bangāru Kāmākshi* and go and settle down in a place in the south, far removed from the scene of trouble and disorder. They considered amongst themselves and in the year 1566 A.D. (the Tamil year Akshaya) the archakas with their families left Kanchi in a body. They carried with them the *Chaturbhuja Utsava Vigraham** also along with *Bangaru Kamakshi*.

* In the place of this vigraha, a new one was made later and consecrated and this is the one now in the Kāmākshi Amman temple at Kānchipuram.

Their subsequent history is full of adventure. As they had enough property with them they were above want. The temple jewels and other valuable riches were concealed within the udal (உடல்) the temple drum. Wandering through several forests for a period of 28 years they came to

GINGEE

in 1594. Gingee was ruled at that time by the benign sovereign Santana Maharajah. The religious-minded ruler made several valuable presents including many silver vessels to the Deity. These silver vessels are even now to be seen in the Tanjore Sri Kāmākshi Amman Temple, bearing the donor's name in Devanagiri characters. After a stay of 15 years at the Gingee fortress, the archakas travelled southwards. At the forest adjoining

UDAYĀRPĀLAYAM

they stayed for 15 years.

The Zamindar of Udayārpālayam invited the party to come and stay in the town and promised to build a temple for the Deity. The archakas responded to the invitation and in the year 1624 came and settled down in Udayār-

pālayam. They were treated hospitably by the Zamindar and all facilities were given to them.

Although the number of families at the commencement of the migration from Kanchi was only ten, the number since that time had considerably increased. The right of puja by custom belonged to the eldest male in the eldest male line. Barring this single right the members of the several families enjoyed equal rights and privileges.

For a long period of 70 years everything went on well. But unfortunately, the Zamindar began to give preferential treatment to the members of the family that had the puja right and bestowed special favours upon them. For sometime the members of the other families put up with this insult. But soon matters grew worse and the members of the aggrieved families determined to get away from the jurisdiction of the Zamindar of Udayārpālayam.

In Mr. Swaminatha Pillay, the Mirasdar of Anakkudy (near Kumbakonam) they found a very sympathetic friend. This gentleman was of a pious nature and was highly respected

by all, high and low. The Raja of Tanjore presented him with a *Golden Plough* and since that time Mr. Swaminatha Pillay came to be popularly known as the தங்க கலப்பை உழுத ஜமீன்தார் the Zamindar who ploughed with a golden plough. The grievances of the archakas moved him. He said to them: "If you will manage somehow to get *Sri Bangāru Kāmākshi* within my estate I will afford you all shelter and facilities and also screen you from any consequent troubles from the Zamindar of Udayārpālayam." The archakas were overwhelmed with joy at this assurance of protection and help.

They counselled together and in the year 1694 on the appointed night, the members of the aggrieved families with *Bangāru Kāmākshi* left Udayārpālayam in a body. At about 4 a.m., the Zamindar dreamt that the Deity had left his jurisdiction. He woke up and found that the dream was only too true. Although overcome with grief, he mustered presence of mind and immediately sent his men on horseback to overtake the archakas and persuade them to return, assuring them of greater honours and privileges. It was, however, too

late. Before the horsemen could get at the party of discontents, they had crossed the Udayārpālayam border and had gone over to the other side. The horsemen hesitated to proceed further, as before them were ranged Mr. Swaminatha Pillay's armed men ready for action in the event of any trouble. The disappointed men retreated and narrated to their Chief their unsuccessful expedition. The Zamindar wept bitterly and repented of his folly. He beseeched the members of the *favoured family* to settle down permanently in his Zamindari and gave them free gifts of several velis of land and property. The members of this family reluctantly acceded to the request of the Zamindar. The descendants of this family are even now to be seen in Udayārpālayam. The Kāmākshi Amman Mantapam (the place where the Diety was kept), facing south, can even now be seen in that Zamindari.

SUBSEQUENT HISTORY

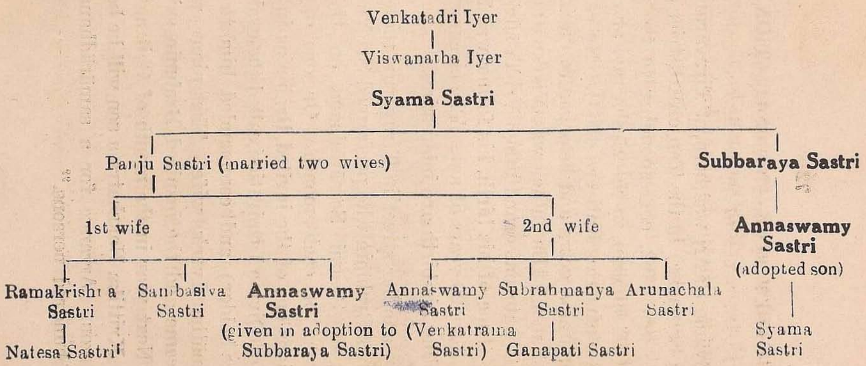
The Anakkudy Zamindar informed the Mahratta Ruler of Tanjore about the arrival of the Kanchi archakas. The Raja was immensely pleased and sent a message of welcome to them

assuring them of Royal support. The archakas were however indifferent to the royal favours for their ultimate object was to get back to their original place in Kānchipuram and settle down there permanently if possible. After staying in *Anakkudy* for a period of 15 years, they went to *Vijayapuram*, where they spent another fifteen years. From Vijayapuram they passed through *Nagore*, *Madapuram* and *Sikkil*, staying in each place for a period of five years. They finally came to *Tiruvārur* where they stayed for a long period of 45 years. The Deity was kept in a special mantapam in Srī Tyāgarājaswāmi Devasthanam. It was at Tiruvārur that the composer Syāma Sāstri was born.

About the year 1781, when there was the fear of an impending invasion and devastation of the whole place by Hyder Ali and his men, Syāma Sāstri's father Viswanatha Iyer, to whom the right of puja belonged at that time, interviewed Raja Tulajāji (1765-1787), the then ruler of Tanjore and obtained his consent to come and stay with his family within the walls of the Tanjore fortress, where there was greater pro-

tection and security. Accordingly in the Tamil year Sarvari (1781) he came to Tanjore with his family. In the Konkaniswara Swami Kovil in Tanjore, the Deity was kept for five years. About the same time several other idols from different shrines, including that of Sri Tyāgarājaswamy Devasthanam of Tiruvārur, were brought and secured in this temple. Many vigrahas from Vaishnavite temples were secured in the Rajagopalaswamy Temple in Tanjore. But after the death of Hyder Ali, these idols were removed to their original places. From the Natarāja Mantapam of Konkaniswara Swamy Temple, *Bangāru Kāmākshi* was taken and kept for three years at the Moolai Hanumār Kovil. Soon a new temple was built and the swarna vigraha was brought and installed there. On the occasion of the Kumbhābhishekam ceremonies the Raja gave Syāma Sāstri's father large free-hold estates, including an agraharam and cultivable lands, and endowed the temple with 32 velis sarvamānyam. This temple which is now almost 160 years old is the one at Tanjore called Sri Kāmākshi Amman Temple.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE



EARLY LIFE AND INITIATION INTO MUSIC

Syāma Sāstri was born at Tiruvārur (also called Srinagar) in the Tanjore District on the 26th April 1762, corresponding to the Tamil year Chitrabhānu, in the Mesha ravi and Krittika Nakshatra (Kali era 4863). He came of the Gautama gotra and belonged to the Bodhayana Sutra. His father was Visvanātha Iyer and his paternal grandfather Venkatādri Iyer. At the time of his birth, his father was 25 and his mother 20 years of age. The circumstances attending his birth are interesting.

In another street in Tiruvārur, there lived a devout Brahmin who performed Sri Venkatachalapati Swami Samārādhana on the last Saturday of each month. On one of those occasions one of the invited Brahmins in a moment of Divine Inspiration called the grahastha (house-holder) and commanded him to fetch Visvanātha Iyer's wife. The pious woman soon came and the inspired Brahmin said:—

> "Next year in the month of Chitra, in the Krittika Nakshatra a son will be born to you. Arrange for a samārādhana for hundred persons."

The woman humbly replied:—

"We have not enough................"

"If not for a hundred, at least for twenty-five"

retorted the inspired devotee and forthwith the inspiration vanished.

(This incident is related by Subbarāma Dikshitar in the *Sangita Sampradāya Pradarsini* in a slightly different form. But the late Mr. Syāma Sāstri the great-grandson of the illustrious composer gave me the version given here.)

Our hero's mother returned home joyously. According to the Brahmin's word, she conceived and after a period of ten months on the day predicted was delivered of a male child. As the child was born in the Krittika Nakshatra, the sarmam of Venkatasubrahmanya was given. Out of affection however the child was called 'Syāma Krishna.' The boy was brought up with parental care and affection. The mother and the father intuitively knew that their son was destined to become great but they did not and could not guess that he was to make his name in the field of *music*. When he came of age he was given a sound education in Sanskrit

and Telugu. He learnt the rudiments of music from his maternal uncle, who was not a great musician. When he reached 18 years of age he came over to Tanjore along with his parents.

Syāma's ancestors were not musicians; nor did they encourage the study and practice of music in their families. So much so, that when the lad mastered the rudiments of music from his maternal uncle in a very short time, nobody took any notice of it. No one dreamt that this young lad of eighteen was destined to give to the world those immortal kriti compositions in a style peculiarly his own. Although he was gifted with a very sweet and melodious voice, still the idea of giving a good musical training to him never occurred to his parents. But nature plans her own methods for the training of her chosen ones.

Even as the divine minstrel *Nārada* came in the guise of a sanyāsi and initiated Tyāgarāja into the mysteries of music by presenting him with the work known as *svarārnava,* even as a sage in the person of *Chidambaranātha Yogi* came to Muttuswamy Dikshitar to initiate him into the secrets of *Nija Sangita* (true music),

so also a sanyāsi in the person of *Sangita Swami* came to Syāma Sāstri, to initiate him into the hitherto unknown mysteries of Tāla and Rāga. Sangita Swami was an adept in the art of music and Bharata Sāstra. He used to perform *nartana* (dance) before Sri Visveswara at Benares every day. This Swami was an Andhra Brahmin and in the course of his pilgrimage to the south, came to Tanjore. As the Chāturmāsya period had just then commenced he was obliged to stay in Tanjore and spend the period of four months there.

At the invitation of his father one day the Swāmiji had his *biksha* there. The *biksha* over, the father introduced his son to the distinguished guest. The Swamiji at a moment's glance noticed that the young person had rare musical talents. He immediately predicted the future greatness of Syāma. The father thanked the Swamiji for his kindness in responding to his invitation and requested him to bless his son.

From that day onwards, *Sangita Swāmi* bestowed special attention on the musical training of Syāma and led him to the hitherto unknown mysteries of the rāga and tāla pras-

tāra kramas. Having acquired real scholarship in the Telugu and Sanskrit languages under the able tutelage of his father, and possessing a keen intellect and a rare capacity to grasp even the most subtle and difficult branches of the science of music, Syāma was just the pupil to receive instruction in the higher branches of the art from the great guru *Sangita Swami*. He made amazing progress and soon mastered all the intricacies of the rāga, tāla and swara prastāras. The guru in great joy presented him with some rare musical granthas (works) which contained a mine of information on the mysteries of the gandharva vidyā.

Towards the close of the chāturmāsya period the master said unto his pupil:—

> " My dear Syāma! you have learnt enough of the sangita sāstra (theory of music). Now it is time you listen to a lot of *good* music. Particularly I would suggest that you cultivate the friendship of *Pachchimiriyam Ādi-

* Pachimiriam Adiyappayya the immortal composer of the famous "Viriboni Varna" in the Bhairavi Raga, though a great musician and a composer, it seems was not a good teacher of music. "கேண்மைமட்டும் இருக்கட்டும் - அவரிடத்தில் ஒன்றும் கற்றுக்கொள்ள வேண்டாம்" was the Swamiji's advice to Syama Sastri.

> yappayya, the Āsthāna Vidvān of Tanjore Samasthanam, and listen to his scholarly music as often as possible. But take care that you don't learn anything from him."

So saying Sangita Swāmi blessed his pupil and went back to Benares.

According to his guru's advice Syāma Sāstri made the acquaintance of Ādiyappayya, who in his time was adored as the king of musicians. They soon became very good friends. In course of time Ādiyappayya came to have a reverential regard for his pupil. He used to call him affectionately 'Kāmākshi'. Whenever our hero went to the Āsthāna vidvan, the latter's disciples went to take leave and disperse, for they knew the great regard which their guru had for Syāma Sāstri and the pleasure he derived from conversing with him. Ādiyappayya was over fifty when his young disciple was just over eighteen. An incident is recorded which will testify to the reverential regard which the Asthāna vidvān had for his young sishya.

Syāma Sāstri had an undue fondness for chewing betel leaves. That is why he is represented in an oil painting as holding folded betel

leaves in his hand. One day in the course of a conversation, a portion of the betel leaves' juice slipped from his mouth and fell on the clothes of his guru. Apologising immediately for the negligence on his part, he hastened to fetch water to remove the stain from his guru's clothes. Ādiyappayya prevented him and said: "My dear Syāma! This is Sri Kāmākshi's Anugraham (blessing). I was only waiting for this from a long time. Now only I am initiated into the mysteries of *nija saṅgita* (true music)." And so saying he prevented him from even touching his stained cloth.

HIS CAREER

At the time of the commencement of his career, Syāma Sāstri was well placed in life, his father having received large gifts of land from the Mahratta Rajah of Tanjore. He was thus above want. After his father, the duty of performing puja to *Bangāru Kāmākshi* devolved upon him.

Syāma Sāstri soon acquired a great name and fame as an expert musician and composer. His scholarly musical compositions, consisting mostly of kritis and svarajatis, brought on him

the warmest encomiums even from the most uncompromising critics of his time. In the skill of manipulating the most intricate time-measures he had no equal. He was able to handle the apurva rāgas with as much ease as the more common ones. His first kriti "*Janani Natajana paripālini Pāhimām Bhavāni*" (Sāveri rāga) in Sanskrit reveals the genius of the rising composer.

He was an intensely pious person and his devotion to Sri Kāmākshi was thoroughly genuine. He was a person who spoke to the Goddess and to whom the Goddess spoke. Sri Kāmākshi was to him a real living person (*pratyaksham*) and She gave him *darshan* more than once and blessed him. Truly Syāma Sāstri was a *Mahāpurusha.* On Fridays and other sacred days he would sit down in prayer and in the height of devotion, tears used to roll down his face. During those inspired moments, when he lost all consciousness of mundane existence, he sang many of those sweet, melodious songs, which for their originality, richness of musical conception and abundance of feeling will for ever remain the admiration of music scholars. I was told by his descen-

dants now living in Tanjore, that it was Syāma Sāstri who gave "*Sri Vidya Upadesam*" (*i.e.*, initiation into the cult of Devi Bhakti) to his illustrious contemporary Muttuswāmy Dikshitar.

Syāma Sāstri had a majestic appearance and a commanding personality. He had a beautiful complexion and always wore a pure white, slightly lace-bordered cloth. The saffron mark on his fore-head, his *Rudrāksha-mālā* mounted in gold round his neck, his diamond ear-rings, his bright-coloured shawl, his silver-mounted walking-stick, his beautiful slippers all contributed to his impressive personality. Nobody who saw him even once forgot him. As he passed along the streets, the people seated on the pials of the houses on both sides got up and paid respects to him and the people who went in front made way for him to pass through. "Truly he is the king of musicians" everyone exclaimed. Such was the great reverence and regard which one and all had for him.

Unlike his two illustrious contemporaries, he had few disciples and even to those few he did not care to teach all his compositions with

Syāma Sāstri 1762—1827.

the same zeal, interest and enthusiasm. Had he only done so, we should at the present day be in possession of the music of all the three hundred musical compositions he is said to have composed. He was content to lead a peaceful life and was scarcely afflicted by the turmoils of the outside world. Placed in good circumstances he was not obliged to make a living through music. He disdained royal favours and would never stoop to *narastuti*—praise of mortal men. Tyāgarāja and he were good friends and occasionally he used to go to Tyāgarāja's house in Tiruvayār. As soon as the latter's disciples saw Syāma Sāstri, they murmured amongst themselves, "Oh! To-day we will have our meal only at 2 p.m.; these two composers will go on talking, talking, talking....". At those occasional meetings, the two great personages used to compare their new pieces and profited by mutual criticism. He did not go on extensive pilgrimage tours like his contemporaries, but spent most of his time in Tanjore.

NAVARATNA-MĀLIKĀ

Once he was invited by a friend to go to Pudukottai. While there, an unknown person came to him and requested him to go to Sri Minākshi Sannidhānam at Madurai and sing a

few kritis in Her praise. He thought it was a command from above and forthwith started for Madurai along with his sishya Alasur Krishnayyar. On his way he composed nine kritis in praise of Sri Minakshi Amman and called them 'the *Navaratna-mālika*', the garland of nine gems. He sang the *Navaratna-mālika* before the Goddess in Madurai and received Her blessing. *Temple honours were bestowed upon him. Since that time it became customary for the descendants of Syāma Sāstri to be received with Temple honours in that shrine. Of the kritis constituting the *Navaratna-mālika* the following seven are widely known:—

Name of the Kriti.	*Raga.*	*Tala.*
Sarojadalanetri	.. Sankarābharana	.. Ādi
Devi minanetri	.. Sankarābharana	.. Ādi
Mariveregati	.. Ānandabhairavi	.. Chāpu
Nannubrovu Lalita	.. Lalita	.. Misralaghu
Māyamma	.. Āhiri	.. Ādi
Devi ni padasārasa	.. Kāmbhoji	.. Ādi
Minalochana brova	.. Dhanyāsi	.. Chāpu

**Note.*—It is said that his recital of the early songs of the Navartna-mālika did not command the attention they deserved. This was his first visit to Madurai, and neither the bhattars (archakas) nor the worshippers who had gathered there knew that he was the great composer, Syāma Sāstri. When he came to the Āhiri piece, he rendered it with so much feeling that the Goddess was moved. Forthwith one of the bhattars got an inspiration and said: "Here is a great Devi bhakta. Temple honours should be bestowed upon him." On enquiry, those present there came to know that it was the great composer Syāma Sāstri. He was then welcomed by all and his new compositions were praised.

HIS CONTRIBUTION

Of the musicial trinity, perhaps the compositions of Syāma Sāstri are least well known and least distributed. This is due to two causes: firstly, his compositions are of a scholarly nature and are in intricate time-measures. It was possible only for persons who had attained a high degree of proficiency in music to master them and sing them correctly. It was always considered a rare accomplishment in a musician to be able to sing or play a few of Sastri's compositions correctly. Sāstri's kritis have been the admiration of musical pundits for a long time. It is for one thing difficult for the masses and those unlettered in music to be able to enjoy and appreciate his compositions. It is the privilege only of those initiated in music to be able to feel, understand and truly enjoy the superb excellence of his kritis. Most of them like those of Tyāgarāja were composed during his moments of inspiration and hence abound with feeling. His compositions in apurva rāgas like Mānji, Kalagada and Chintāmani stand as monumental proofs of his rare genius and originality in discovering new forms in fields which to others were apparently barren.

His compositions are to be found both in chauka kāla and madhyama kāla.

Secondly, Syāma Sāstri did not have many disciples around him to learn his compositions with devotion and zeal. In the days when printing facilities did not exist, the one method by which a composer made himself known was by gathering a number of disciples around himself and teaching his compositions to them. These people afterwards went and sang them before the public and thus gave publicity to them. Therefore the compositions of those who had a larger number of disciples had greater chances of publicity. This accounts to some extent for the wide popularity and distribution of Tyāgarāja's kritis. Tyāgarāja had more than twenty devoted disciples who learnt the pieces from their master with reverential regard and who afterwards taught them to several others in their respective districts. The great bard of Tiruvayār also drew his disciples from distant places and this accounts for the distribution of his songs over a large area. Muttuswāmy Dikshitar's compositions also attained publicity through his two brothers, his descendants and his disciples.

Syāma Sāstri was a scholarly composer in every sense of the term. His compositions are not of the class that immediately catch the imagination of the layman. They have got to be studied over and over again before their intrinsic merits can be appreciated. He was indeed a creative artist to a high degree and has given us a distinct style of kriti composition. His style is neither so simple and homely as Tyāgarāja's nor so difficult and laborious as Muttuswāmy Dikshitar's. He has composed songs in Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil. The rāga svaroopa is patent in the face of every one of his compositions. For the beauty of the language employed by him and for the polished nature of his music, he can be compared only to Tyāgarāja. As a sterling devi bhakta, he chose the praise of Devi as the theme for his pieces. He delighted in introducing in many pieces, the *atita-anāgata* complexities. He composed in intricate time-measures and signed his pieces with the *ankitam* (signature) "Syāma Krishna." Some of his compositions like the Bhairavi Svarajati and the kriti in Lalita rāga contain the rāga mudra. His compositions abound in Suddha, Suchita and Misra Svarāksharas. He is said to have composed about three hundred

pieces consisting mostly of kritis, and a few svarajatis and varnas. Besides these, he has left us valuable *mss.* wherein he has worked out with great patience and care and in full detail the different prastāras in the tāla system.

In some of his compositions, we find him illustrating certain technical principles. In his Bhairavi Svarajati, the initial notes of the eight charanas progress in the ārohana krama: s r g m p d n s. The procedure for the ārohana sthayi branch of rāga ālapana is thus illustrated by him.

Once, a few disciples of Syāma Sāstri, who had exaggerated notions of their own musical talents, went before Tyāgarāja and sang some of their guru's kritis. They failed to sing them correctly and in one or two places committed grievous blunders. Tyāgarāja got so annoyed that he forthwith asked them to stop and remarked: "You have miserably failed to grasp the rhythmical construction of his pieces. You are actually murdering them and you are sinning against the great composer.....". It was this incident that provoked the composition of the kriti *"Vara rāga layagnulu"* in Chenchu-

kāmbhoji rāga. The sāhitya of this song freely translated will mean " Those who did not know even the fundamentals of music went about masquerading as experts in rāga and laya ".

Syāma Sāstri seems to have had a special liking for the Anandabhairavi rāga. He has composed more pieces in that rāga than any other modern composer. To a true artist, minor rāgas afford as much scope for creative expression as the major ones and this fact will be amply borne out by a close study of his Ānandabhairavi pieces. His tāna varna *Sāmini rammanave* in Ānandabhairavi rāga, Ata tāla is in praise of Varadarāja of Kānchipuram. He took a special delight in composing kritis and svarajatis in the chāpu tāla. In his kritis, we come across the chāpu tāla of both the normal (3 + 4) pattern and the reverse (4 + 3) pattern.

Some of his compositions have been enriched by the addition of svara sāhityas. The svara sāhitya to *O Jagadamba* (Ānandabhairavi) was composed by his disciple Sangita Swāmi and the svara sāhityas to *Pālinchu Kāmākshi* (Madhyamāvati) and *Pāhi Sri Girirāja sute* (Ānandabhairavi) were added by his grandson Annāswāmy Sāstri.

From the point of view of *rasabhāva* Tyāgarāja's compositions are compared to the *drāksha* (grapes), Muttuswāmy Dikshitar's to the *nalikera* (cocoanut), whose pulp can be eaten only after the shell is broken and Syāma Sāstri's to the kadali (plantain fruit), to eat which we have only to peel off the thin skin.

In addition to the Navaratnamālika (*see* p. 82) the following are some of the well-known compositions of Syāma Sāstri:

Kritis:

Beginning words	*Raga*	*Tala.*
Ninne nammināmu ..	Todi	.. Chāpu
Kanakasaila ..	Punnāgavarāli	.. Ādi
Enneramum (Tamil) ..	„	.. „
Brova samayamu ..	„	.. „
Parvati ninnu ..	Kalagada	.. Roopaka
Tarunamidamma (Tamil) ..	Gaulipantu	.. Chāpu
Triloka māta ..	Pharaj	.. „
Nilāyatākshi ..	„	.. Triputa
Sankari sankuru ..	Sāveri	.. Tisra laghu
Janani natajana ..	„	.. Ādi
Durusuga krupa ..	„	.. „
Brovavamma ..	Mānji	.. Chāpu
O Jagadamba ..	Ānandabhairavi	.. Ādi
Himāchala tanaya ..	„	.. Chāpu
Pāhi Sri Girirājasute ..	„	.. Roopaka

Kritis—(*Contd.*)

Beginning words ..	*Raga*	*Tala*
Pālinchu Kāmākshi	.. Madhyamāvati	.. Ādi
Ninnuvina marigalada	.. Abheri	.. „
Akhilandeswari	.. Kāpi	.. „
Karuna juduninnu	.. Srirāga	.. Chāpu
Karuna judavamma	.. Varāli	.. Ādi
Ninnu vinaga mari	.. Purvakalyāni	.. Misarlaghu
Devi brova samayamide	.. Chintāmani	.. Ādi
Talli ninnu nera	.. Kalyāni	.. Chāpu
* Himādri sute	.. „	.. Roopaka
* Birāna varālichchi	.. „	.. „

Swarajatis:

Rāve Himagiri	.. Todi	.. Ādi
Kāmākshi anudinamu	.. Bhairavi	.. Chāpu
Kāmākshi ni	.. Yadukulakāmbhoji	.. „

Tana Varna:

Samini rammanave	.. Ānandabhairavi	.. Ata

---

* These two kritis: *Himādri sute pahimām* and *Birāna varālichchi* are sung to the same music. Symāma Sāstri originally composed only in Sanskrit sāhitya: *Himādri sute pāhimām*. Later at the request of some friends he composed the Telugu Sāhitya *Birāna varālichchi brovumu* for the very same dhātu. Even now it will be seen that musicians belonging to one sishya parampara of his will sing the Sanskrit sāhitya, *Himādri sute pāhimām* and those belonging to another will sing the Telugu sāhitya, *Birāna varālichchi.*

CHAPTER VIII

ANECDOTES

Several interesting anecdotes about Syāma Sāstri have been handed down.

During the reign of Sarabhoji, there came to Tanjore a musician from Bobbili called Kesavayya. He was so puffed up with his musical talents that he arrogated to himself the title 'Bhuloka Chāpa Chutti' (பூலோக சாப சுட்டி—భూలోక చాప చుట్టి)—the man who rolled the world into a mat. Thirsting for fame, he travelled towards the south. On his way he went to several samasthānams and challenged the vidvāns there. Invariably he won in all the musical contests and compelled the vanquished musicians to surrender their tamburas and all the costly presents they had received from their patrons—the rajahs and zamindars. Encouraged by these successes he desired to go to Tanjore also and challenge the vidvāns there. The Tanjore samasthānam in those days had the reputation of having in it some of the best exponents of the art. Kesavayya's ambition was to gain a victory even over the Tanjore

vidvāns and return back victorious to Bobbili with laurel wreaths and secure for himself undying fame and renown.

In course of time he came to Tanjore and one day went to the samasthānam and boldly challenged the vidvāns there.

To save the reputation of Tanjore, the palace vidvāns were obliged to accept the challenge from the Bobbili musician. True, there were many illustrious musicians in the samasthānam, who could easily have vanquished ten Kesavayyas, but they got unnerved at hearing the story of his continued success in the several samasthānams. His pompous attitude, his preposterous title, his majestic tambura bedecked with flag, the sight of the cartloads of tamburas and other costly presents surrendered by the several defeated musicians, the pile of *Jayapradha patras*, i.e., documents signed and delivered by defeated musicians acknowledging that at the musical contest held on such and such a date, he the signatory got defeated at the hands of Bobbili Kesavayya accompanying him, all these and more made them despair of success. They counselled amongst themselves and at last resolved that

the only person who could successfully deal a blow to the Andhra musician and save the honour of Tanjore was Syāma Sāstri.

A day was fixed for the contest and on the day prior to this, the palace vidvāns went in a body to Syāma Sāstri's house and acquainted him with the situation. Syāma Sāstri, like his contemporary Tyāgarāja, disdained royal patronage and rarely visited the palace. Even on rare occasions when he was in need of money, he got the help willingly offered by two rich friends of his, at Tiruvadamarudur and at Pudukottai. The only consideration that prevailed upon Syāma Sāstri to accede to the request of the vidvāns was that he might thereby save the reputation of Tanjore.

The news that the great Syāma Sāstri had consented to meet Kesavayya in the musical contest on the following day spread like wild fire. Musicians and lay people gathered in thousands the next day to witness the great historic contest. The Mahārājah was hopeful that the reputation of Tanjore would be saved by Syāma Sāstri.

After the palace vidvāns left, Syāma Sāstri sat alone and pondered deeply over the

matter. He too felt a bit unnerved at the thought that he had accepted the challenge. The highly coloured accounts that the palace musicians gave of Kesavayya and his musical prowess was not without its effect even on his mind. After the evening prayers, he went and shut himself up in the temple and prayed devoutly that he might be successful in the next day's ordeal. He sang on that occasion the famous kriti in Chintāmani rāga, Ādi tāla "*Devi brova samaya mide*". No other composer seems to have attempted a kriti in this rāga. The music of this kriti by itself reveals the perturbed state of Sāstri's mind at that time. The Goddess was pleased with Her bhakta's prayers and forthwith he saw some good signs indicative of his morrow's success. He returned home with great joy.

Next day he left his home for the palace. He had the kunkumum (saffron-mark) on his forehead as usual. As he entered the palace, the eager crowd lustily cheered him. Syāma Sāstri took his seat opposite the Bobbili vidvān and soon there was a profound silence in the whole assembly. Everyone held his breath and eagerly awaited to see what was going to happen. The Mahārājah had ready before him all

the costly presents on a silver tray to be given to the person emerging victorious.

The signal for the commencement having been given, Kesavayya forthwith tuned his tambura and started singing a rāga. He followed it up with tāna. He exhibited wonderful creative skill by singing tānas in different jātis and gatis. The Bobbili musician was at his best in this branch of creative music and with the idea of winning an immediate victory he tried all the intricate types that he had learnt and practised for years. When he stopped, Syāma Sāstri asked him coolly "Is this all or anything more ?" This proved a bomb-shell to the Bhooloka Chāpa Chutti, for he thought his opponent would immediately prostrate before him and acknowledge his defeat.

When it came to the turn of Syāma Sāstri to sing, he not only sang similar tānas without the least effort, but displayed greater original scholarship in presenting newer aspects of this branch of creative music, left altogether untouched by his opponent. After exhausting the possibilities in this direction he directed his attention to the other sub-

varieties, of whose very existence Kesavayya was ignorant.

Every one in the audience saw that while the music of Kesavayya, though grand and thought-provoking was somewhat stereotyped, that of Syāma Sāstri was characterised by richness of musical conception and creative art of a high order.

When it was found that the two experts were running close upon each other and there was no chance of the contest being decided either way, the issue had to be forced. The two contestants agreed mutually to put three questions to the other by turn. It was agreed that Syāma Sāstri should start questioning. Sastri asked Kesavayya :

" Can you sing in the Sāstraic manner ?" (truly an insulting question to be asked of such a mighty opponent).

" Yes " replied Kesavayya.

" Then sing tāna without the slightest shake of your head " said Sāstri.

Undue movements of the head as also violent gestures while in the act of singing are recognised Gāyaka doshas (faults in singing).

Kesavayya attempted but found it difficult to sing tānas without head movements. Having been long accustomed to sing with head shakes, he felt circumscribed.

Now it was the turn of Kesavayya to put a question. He sang a pallavi in Simhanandana tāla and asked Syāma Sāstri to repeat it. The expert that Syāma Sāstri was in the realm of rhythm, he forthwith sang the same pallavi in a clear, faultless manner, as if he was thoroughly familiar with it.

When now the turn of Syāma Sāstri came, he sang a pallavi in Sarabhanandana tāla and asked Kesavayya to repeat it. Kesavayya was not able to make head or tail of this pallavi. This tāla, a creation of Syāma Sāstri employed some of the shodasāngas and even the reckoning of some of the shodasāngas appeared novel to Kesavayya. This tāla took 19¾ mātras or 79 aksharakālas for an āvarta. The sequence of the angas of this tāla was as follows:---

Guru, laghu, drutam, laghu, laghu, drutam, anudrutam, laghu virāmam, drutam, drutam, drutam, anudrutam, laghu drutam, laghu druta virāmam, laghu virāmam, drutam, anudrutam, drutam, anudrutam, drutam, laghu virāmam, drutam, druta virāmam, laguh drutam (24 angas).

Note.—There is an appropriateness in Syama Sastri trying to quell his opponent's pallavi in Simhanandana tāla

with a pallavi in Sarabhanandana tāla. It is puranically handed down that God Narasimha, after slaying Hiranya became furious intoxicated with the rākshasa blood. All the Devas quaked with fear and thought that the destruction of the world was in sight. Just at that time God Siva took the form of Sarabha, a winged bird with a lion's face and 8 feet and sucked the demonish blood from Narasimha and restored tranquility to the joy of all. The image of Sarabha can be seen in the temple at Tiribhuvanam, near Kumbakonam in South India.

Kesavayya was easily humbled. The joy of the spectators knew no bounds. Numerous were the honours and ecomiums showered upon Syāma Sāstri by the Mahārājah, for he had saved the honour of Tanjore at a critical moment. The palace vidvāns in a body expressed their heartfelt thanks to Syāma Sāstri.

I am giving this anecdote as narrated to me by the late Vidvān Manathattai Doraiswamy Iyer who got it from his uncle, Vidvān Manathattai Ramaswamy Iyer.

In appreciation of Kesavayya's talents however, the Mahārājah presented him with a Copper Plate.

Kesavayya was a strong-built man and he rode on horseback. After the contest he stayed in Tanjore for a few days. One day as he was going along the streets of Tanjore on horseback he found Syāma Sāstri coming from the opposite side. Stopping his horse in front of him he gnashed his teeth and said angrily "You have been responsible for the loss of all

my reputation ......" Sāstri coolly replied: "This is all of your own making."

* * *

Appukutti, a † nattuvan of Nāgapattinam, was very proud of his musical attainments and deliberately put to disgrace every vidvān that he came across. When Syāma Sāstri went to Nāgapattinam on some private business, the local musicians surrounded him and besought him to redress their longstanding grievance. A conference was soon arranged in the Nilāyatākshi Amman temple and it was agreed beforehand that if Appukutti got defeated he was to give up his tambura and tāla and retire from the profession; in the event of Syāma Sāstri's defeat he was to become a sanyāsi forthwith. The nattuvan was no match for our hero and he was easily routed in a simple pallavi. Forthwith Appukutti left Nāgapattinam for Mysore where he received royal patronage. The nattuvan, gentleman that he was, spoke to the Mahārājah about the rare talents of the great Syāma Sāstri. At the Mahārājah's request, he went to Tanjore to request our hero to come to Mysore.

---

† Nattuvans are the hereditary class of teachers of the art of dancing in S. India.

Laying at the feet of Syāma Sāstri all the costly medals and khillats he had received from the Mahārājah, he said unto him :—

"The Mahārājah of Mysore has heard of your greatness and is very anxious to see you. He is desirous of honouring you with *kanakābhishekam. So please come."

To this Sāstri replied, "My dear man, the royal favours and honours are no lure for me. Further my end is approaching. So I cannot possibly come". The nattuvan reluctantly withdrew and returned back to Mysore to tell the Mahārājah about the failure of his attempt. This incident took place in 1826, six months prior to his demise.

* * *

While young, one day Syāma's father left him in charge of the temple and went out on

* Kanakābhishekam is a special honour that is bestowed upon distinguished men of letters and music in India. The honour consists in seating the vidvān on a golden or silver plated seat and pouring on his head the contents of a vessel full of gold coins. When the ceremony is over, the plate, the vessel and its contents become the honoured person's property. Arunagirināthar, the immortal author of the *Tiruppugazh* hymns was honoured like this by the Manali Mudaliyar of his time. Later Arunāchala Kavirāyar, the author of the Rāma-nātakam was honoured with kanakābhishekam by Manali Muttukrishna Mudaliar. Muttuswamy Dikshitar also was honoured like this by Vaidyalinga Mudaliar, the learned Mirasidar of Kulikarai, a village to the south-west of Tiruvarur.

some business. At that time a devotee came to perform archana to Sri Kāmākshi. Young Syāma Sāstri recited the mantras distinctly in a melodious manner and in rāgas appropriate to the time. The devotee was so pleased, that he went out forthwith, purchased a costly shawl and presented the same to him. Syāma Sāstri thanked the devotee for his generosity. He then went to his maternal uncle (his first music guru) wearing the new shawl and prostrated before him for blessing, as is usually the custom on such occasions. That gentleman, instead of rejoicing over the incident grew jealous of his nephew's talents and tore his (nephew's) music note-books into pieces and threw them away. Tears began to roll down the face of Syāma Sāstri, for he was hardly prepared for this insult. Leaving his uncle's presence, he came to his father, who had returned by this time, and narrated all that took place. The father instead of consoling the son, said: "My dear Syāma, why do you want music? It is un-brahminical to learn music. It is your duty and dharma to specialise only in sacred lore." Syāma Sāstri without muttering a word retreated in silence. But he intuitively knew that he had a genius for music and was

destined to attain name and fame as a great composer.

*   *   *

Syāma Sāstri was an adept in the Jyotisha Sāstra (astrology). His two illustrious contemporaries, Tyāgarāja and Muttuswāmi Dikshitar, also were masters of this science. His predictions always turned out to be correct. He sometimes merely looked at the face of a person and predicted his future. One day as he was sitting on the pial of his house, conversing with a few friends, a certain person passed along the street. Something struck Syāma Sāstri and he immediately called the wayfarer and said : " My dear man, I am sorry to tell you that you have only eight days more to live—so prepare yourself." The man went away sadly. He passed away on the eighth day as predicted.

*   *   *

A friend of Syāma Sāstri once went to one of the astrologers attached to the Tanjore Samasthānam and giving his horoscope, requested him to tell his future. The astrologer threw at him a bombshell by saying that his end was drawing near. Forthwith he came

weeping to Syāma Sāstri. The latter just glanced at his horoscope and smilingly replied: "Do not feel worried, my dear friend. You will live for ten more years." This turned out to be true.

* * *

Syāma Sāstri was reputed to possess both *anugraha* and *nigraha* powers, i.e., powers to bless and curse a person—a power that was possessed by the Maharishis in ancient times. It is well known that his contemporaries, Tyāgarāja and Muttuswāmy Dikshitar, also possessed these powers.

One evening he was passing through Manojiappa Street in Tanjore in the company of his friend * Annākutty Iyer. As they passed an explosives shop opposite the Droupati amman temple, the young shopkeeper was heard to caustically remark, "There goes the Kāmākshi amman temple archaka..." When Syāma Sāstri's attention was drawn to this, he said : †"Perhaps his end is drawing near—that is why he is remarking in that

---

* He was a namam (நாமம்) wearing Brahacharanam Brahmin.

† "சரம்பலாகிற காலம் வந்தால் அவன் அப்படி சொல்லுவான்" were the actual words uttered by him on that occasion.

strain." Nobody took any notice of Sastri's words. But lo! within half an hour there was a terrible explosion within the shop resulting in the utter destruction of everything and nothing remained of the young shop-keeper except his ashes. When Syāma Sāstri returned the same way after an hour, the pitiable scene of the destroyed shop and the horrible fate of the young shop-keeper moved him very much.

HIS LAST DAYS

Like many great men it was also his fortune to possess a devoted wife. She truly felt proud of her husband's greatness and adored him. As is often the case with such virtuous wives, she predeceased him by five days. On the day following her demise, friends, relatives, admirers and disciples of Syāma Sāstri poured into his house to offer him their condolences on his sad bereavement. To all of them he was euphemistically remarking "Sāga anjunāl சாக அஞ்சுனாள்; setta ārunāl செத்த ஆறுநாள்" By this he meant that there were only five days more for him to live in this world (தான்) சாக அஞ்சு (ஐந்து) நாள்; that he would shake off his mortal coil on the sixth day of her demise (அவள்) செத்த ஆறு (ஆரும்) நாள். The

visitors however construed the first sentence to mean "She feared death— (அவள்) சாக அஞ்சினாள்" and did not understand the significance of the second remark.

On the sixth day after the demise of his wife (the day predicted by him) he shook off his mortal coil. He was fully conscious till his last moments. The time of his demise was about 2 p.m. He laid his head on the right thigh of his son Subbarāya Sāstri and cautioned him to recite the Karna mantra punctually at the time he signalled. At the very last moment, Sāstri signalled to his son, who forthwith recited the mantra in his right ear and immediately afterwards Sastri's soul departed from his body. Thus passed away the immortal composer of Tanjore in his 65th year, on the Sukla Dasami day of the Makara masa of the Vyaya samvatsara, according to the Tamil era (Kali era 4927) and corresponding to 6th February 1827.

It is also recorded that his sister performed *sati*, one of the last to do so.

CHAPTER IX

HIS DESCENDANTS AND DISCIPLES

Syāma Sāstri had two sons:—Panju Sāstri and Subbarāya Sāstri.

Panju Sāstri became the temple archaka after his father's demise and carried on the duties well. He married two wives. By the first wife he had three sons named, Rāmakrishna Sāstri, Sāmbasiva Sāstri and Annāswāmy Sāstri. Rāmakrishna Sastri's eldest son, Natesa Sāstri by name, lived for *94 years and passed away recently. He was an interesting personality with charming manners. Though past ninety he still thrilled and inspired the visitors by telling them interesting anecdotes of his great grand-father. He knew many of the kritis of Syāma Sāstri. He was a pious man and truly worthy of the great line of temple archakas, whose history we are able to trace since the days of Ādi Sankarāchārya. Mr. Natesa Sāstri was in possession of several valuable and rare manuscripts on the theory and practice of Karnatic music written by the great Syāma Sāstri himself. Particularly the paper roll manuscripts on tāla prastāra, containing several diagrams and showing the prastāras of the *shodasāngas*, are of permanent value.

* He was born in the Rākshasa Year (1856)

His second son, Sāmbasiva Sāstri was a great scholar, vedānti and brahmajnāni. Children were born to him but they did not survive.

The third son Annāswāmy Sāstri was given in adoption to his father's brother Subbarāya Sāstri.

By his second wife also, Panju Sāstri had three sons. Of these, the eldest Annāswāmy Sāstri died without issue. The second Subramanya Sāstri left an only son Ganapati Sāstri who is now living in Tanjore. The third son, Arunāchala Sāstri died without issue.

SUBBARĀYA SĀSTRI (1803—1862)

Syāma Sāstri's second son Subbarāya Sāstri proved a worthy son of his father. He was born in Tanjore in the year 1803 (in the Dundubhi samvatsara, Simha māsa, Krittikā nakshatra). He attained great scholarship in Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu and music. He had the good fortune to be trained in music first under his father and then under the great composer of Tiruvayār *Tyāgarāja*. He also came under the influence of the Mahratta musicians like Kokilakaṇṭha Merugoswāmy of the Tanjore samasthānam and the silver-voiced

Ramdas Swami of Hindustani music fame. He composed a number of kritis and svarajatis and signed his pieces with the ankitam "Kumāra." His musical compositions are replete with rāga bhāva and abound in beautiful *sangatis* (variations) and graceful technical appendages like the *madhyamakāla sāhitya, chitta svara* and *svara sāhitya,* and some of them contain beautiful svaraksharas. His kritis in apurva rāgas are monumental proofs of his rare genius for original musical composition. He is the only composer to have composed kritis in the styles of the musical trinity. He was also a player on the sārinda. His sārinda concerts were very attractive. He was also an expert violinist. He gave publicity to his musical compositions at the Sri Mīnākshi Amman Temple, Mathurai. He frequently met Tyāgarāja and sang to him his newly composed pieces. Tyāgarāja appreciated them and congratulated the young composer. It is said that when Subbarāya Sāstri sang his newly composed kriti "*Ninu vinā gati gāna jagāna*" before Tyāgarāja in the Dharmasamwardhani sannidhānam in the temple at Tiruvayār, Tyāgarāja went into raptures over the brilliant composition of his disciple and praised him.

Like his father, Subbaraya Sāstri also composed kritis mostly in praise of Devi. He passed away in the year 1862 (on the Krishna Dasami day of the Chāpa māsa of the Durmati samvatsara) in Udayārpālayam, to which place he had been to see his relatives. He enjoyed the patronage of Yuvaranga Bhupati, the Zamindar of Udayārpālayam.

Subbarāya Sāstri stayed in Madras for twelve years. It was during his stay here, that he composed the kriti *"Ninu sevinchina"* in Yadukulakāmbhoji in praise of Sri Parthasārathy, the presiding Deity of the temple in Triplicane.

Subbarāya Sāstri was intensely religious and on the morning of his demise, he felt conscious of his approaching end. As he performed his sandhyā vandanam, he said *"dattam"* and poured the water he had in his hand on the floor. He then said that he would survive for only two hours more. This utterance of his, reached the ears of the people quickly and many gathered to witness the closing moments of this great man. Amongst others, the Zamindar of Udayārpālayam, who had a deep attachment for his family, came to

Subbarāya Sāstri at 8 a.m. and sitting by his bedside entreated the great composer to tell him if he had any desires to be fulfilled. Subbarāya Sāstri replied: "I have nothing to ask. There is the Ambal's (Goddess) anugraham. What more have I to desire in this world ?" And a few minutes later he passed away.

After the demise of Subbarāya Sāstri, the Zamindar of Udayārpālayam, helped his family by giving Annāswāmy Sāstri a sum of Rs. 700 to meet the expenses of his marriage. A good girl of eight years belonging to the Srivatsa Gotra was found for him and Annāswāmy Sāstri got married when he was thirty-three years of age.

The following are some of the better known and widely sung kritis of Subbarāya Sāstri :

Beginning words	*Raga*	*Tala*
Nannu brochutaku	.. Todi	.. Ādi
Sri Kamalamba na	.. Desiya todi	.. Roopaka
Janani ninnu vina	.. Ritigaula	.. Chāpu
Vanajāsana	.. Sri rāga	.. Roopaka
Meena nayana	.. Darbār	.. Ādi
Emani ne ni mahima	.. Mukhāri	.. "
Ninu sevinchina	.. Yadukulakāmbhoji	.. Chāpu
Sankari ni vani	.. Begadā	.. Roopaka
Ninu vina gati	.. Kalyāni	.. Ādi
Venkata saila	.. Hamirkalyāni	.. "

Most of these kritis contain beautiful svara sāhityas, which considerably enhance the technical and musical excellence of the pieces. Subbarāya Sāstri is without doubt the most successful composer of svara sāhityas.

He had a number of brilliant disciples amongst whom may be mentioned:—

1. His adopted son, Annāswāmy Sāstri,
2. His son-in-law, Kānchi Kachi Sāstri,
3. Chandragiri Rangāchārlu,
4. Sobhanādri,
5. Ponnuswāmi,
6. Tirugnāna Mudaliar,
7. Chimaṭa Rāghavalu and
8. Violonist Bālu.

Kachi Sāstri was a good songster and violinist and was highly reputed for his tāla gnānam. Chandragiri Rangāchārlu attained great proficiency in playing the violin in the jāru (ஜாரு) style, which was just then coming into vogue. The *pidi* (பிடி) vādyam style of playing which was till then in vogue was gradually giving way to the new style. He was familiarly known as Fiddle Rangāchārlu. He trained his two cousins Tachur Singarāchārlu and Chinna Singarāchārlu in music. The latter

also had additional training from Annāswāmy Sāstri. Sobhanādri wrote a few sanchāri gitas, lakshana gitas and svarajatis. His svarajati in Ānandabhairavi rāga "*Rāveme maguva*" is a well-known composition.

ANNĀSWĀMY SASTRI (1827—1900)

Subbarāya Sāstri had no sons. As already mentioned, he adopted his elder brother's (Panju Sāstri's) first wife's third son—Annāswāmy Sāstri, who was born in the year 1827 in the Aslesha nakshatra of the Mina māsa of the Vyaya samvatsara. On account of his birth within the first anniversary of Syāma Sāstri's demise, he was given his grand-father's name, Syāma Krishna. He was however familiarly called 'Anna' by everyone. He became a scholar in Telugu and Sanskrit. Under the able tutelage of his father he soon attained proficiency in Kāvya, Nātaka, Alankāra, Vyākarna and music. He practised the violin and became an expert violinist within a few years. He began to compose tāna varnas and kritis from his youth. His daru (దరు) in Kedāragaula rāga, Rupaka tāla '*Kāminchiyunnadira*' and his Sahāna rāga kriti "*Inkevaru*" are two of his well-known compositions. The latter piece is in

praise of the Deity of the shrine in Udayār-pālayam. The svara sāhityas for the kritis: "*Pālinchu Kāmākshi Pāvani*" in Madhyamāvati rāga and "*Pāhi Sri Girirāja sute*" in Ānandabhairavi rāga are his own contributions. His autograph manuscripts on the 72 Melakarta scheme and rāga lakshana are with the members of his family. Annāswāmy Sāstri and Vina Kuppayyar were good friends. They frequently met and took pleasure in singing kalpana svaras for intricate pallavis. Melakkāra Govindan, the tutor of Sarabha Sastri and Tanjore Kāmākshi, the guru of Veena Dhanammāl, were two of his disciples.

Annāswāmy Sāstri passed away in the year 1900, in his 73rd year, on the Krishna Tritiya Day of the Kumbha masa of the Vikari samvatsara, leaving a son named Syāma Sāstri. This gentleman is a good musician and a violinist and is a worthy member of the great line. He has also with him a palm leaf manuscript containing the compositions of his great grandfather. He is also a painter of a high order—a rare accomplishment in a musician. He passed away a few years ago.

HIS DISCIPLES

The principal disciples of Syāma Sāstri were:—

1. His son, Subbarāya Sāstri.
2. Porambur Krishnayyar.
3. Alasur Krishnayyar.
4. Sangita Swāmy.
5. Talangambādi Panchanadayyar.
6. Dāsari.

Alasur Krishnayyar was for sometime the Samasthāna Vidvān at Mysore and attained a great name as an expert in handling intricate pallavis. He had a son, Subbarāya Sāstri by name, who also became a great musician.

Sangita Swāmi, the prathama sishya of Syāma Sāstri, was a yati and a brilliant musician. The svara sāhitya to the kriti *"O Jagadamba"* in Ānandabhairavi rāga is his own contribution. He was a disciple under Syāma Sāstri, before he took to sanyāsa āsrama. His name in the purvāsrama is not definitely known.

An interesting incident is handed down concerning Sangita Swāmy. When he entered the house of Syāma Sāstri after putting on the

saffron robes, the latter, thinking that some yati had come, immediately paid homage and welcomed him in a manner due to personages of his rank. The yati humbly replied: "Oh master, I am only your sishya now, having entered this asrama." Syāma Sāstri was surprised and asked him what were the circumstances that led him to put on these robes.

Talangambādi (Tranquebar) Panchanadayyar became a good composer. His kriti *Birāna brova yidi* (Kalyāni-trisra laghu) and *Sarasijanetra* (Kalagada-trisra laghu) are well-known kritis. His rāgamālika in Tamil *Ārabhimānam* is an interesting composition. He is a svanāma mudrakāra, i.e., signed his compositions with his own name.

Dāsari (padi yinti vallu-పదియింటి వాళ్లు) was an expert nāgasvaram player. An interesting anecdote is narrated of him. Once, on the occasion of an important festival in the Tiruvayār temple, he was engaged to play the nāgasvaram. As the temple procession entered the South Māda street he made a delightful ālāpana of Suddha sāveri rāga and followed it up with the kriti "*Darini telusukonti*". He rendered the

several sangatis of the pallavi in such an excellent and artistic manner that the thousands of people who were listening to the music became spell` bound. Tyāgarāja, who was listening to the music from his house which was close by, got so enraptured that he went near Dāsari and embraced him, congratulating him on his splendid performance. The piper who was taken unawares began to tremble in the presence of the great composer. But the apostle of absolute music applauded him on his beautiful performance and wished him a bright career.

Note.—The picture of Syāma Sāstri given in this book is a reproduction from a painting in the possession of the family of the great composer. When Syāma Sāstri foretold the day of his demise, hurried arrangements were made to paint a picture of his. Muthukrishnan, the Palace Painter was sent for on the morning of his demise. He came and in about two hours time he painted on a piece of plank the picture of the head part alone. This painted part was submitted to Syāma Sāstri and he expressed his approval of the same. The body and the other parts of the picture were subsequently completed. Syāma Sāstri was a stout person. He passed away at 3 p.m. on that day (6th February 1827). The Srichakram and the idols to which he offered daily puja are with the family of the late Natesa Sāstri, a great-grandson of Syāma Sāstri. The nonagenarian Natesa Sāstri passed away in March 1950. Natesa Sāstri had three elder brothers: Kuppuswāmi Sastri, Viswanātha Sāstri and Sankara Sāstri. These three brothers pre-deceased him. Of the three, Kuppuswāmi Sāstri was a great singer and vainika.

Forthcoming Publications of the Author

1. Dictionary of South Indian Music and Musicians—the first work of its kind relating to Karnatic Music.
2. Great Composers: Book II
3. South Indian Music: Book V
4. The Musical compositions of Cheyyur Chengalvaraya Sastriyar including his Telugu opera, SUNDARESA VILASAM.

Books by the same Author

IN ENGLISH

The Teaching of Music	...	5	0	0
South Indian Music : Book I (4th edition)		1	0	0
do ,, II (,, ,,)		1	8	0
do ,, III (3rd ,,)		2	8	0
do ,, IV (2nd ,,)		3	0	0
The Melakarta Janya Raga scheme with Chart	...	0	12	0
The 72 Melakarta Chart (separately)	...	0	4	0
The Flute (2nd edition)	...	1	0	0

Indian Melodies in Staff Notation: Book I	1	0	0
Madras as a seat of Musical Learning ...	0	2	0
Mode-shift-ton or Graha Bheda Pradarsini Instrument ...	70	0	0
do Explanatory Pamphlet ...	0	4	0

★

IN TAMIL

Practical Course in Karnatic Music:

Book I (7th edition)	1	0	0
do " II (5th ")	1	8	0
do " III (4th ")	2	8	0
Tyagaraja's Nowka Charitram ...	1	4	0